Weaving the Strands Together:

Case studies in inclusive and equitable landscape conservation

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to illustrate how values of diversity, equity, and inclusion have strengthened landscape conservation projects across the United States. Additional resources for the landscape conservation community are provided to assist others in the process of integrating diversity, inclusion, and equity principles into their work. This report is a joint project of the Network for Landscape Conservation, the Salazar Center for North American Conservation, and the Center for Large Landscape Conservation, in cooperation with the four initiatives profiled herein.

A NOTE ON THE TITLE

Weaving has been used for thousands of years as a metaphor for the ways in which human life intertwines with the natural world. From the Ancient Greeks to Native American tribes, weaving has been portrayed as critical, holistic, and life-affirming. Kokyangwuti, spider grandmother, according to Hopi cosmology, is the Earth Goddess who gave birth to humanity. Among the Dine' or Navajo peoples, Na'ashjé'íí Asdzáá, or spider-woman, is the constant protector of humanity. More recently, the author Robin Wall Kimmerer titled her book *Braiding Sweetgrass* to capture the need to weave her Native American and dominant culture American lives and scientific training together into a more coherent whole. The history of American conservation is no different—it is in significant need of rediscovering, reprioritizing, and reweaving the stories and needs of Native Americans, African Americans, and many other disenfranchised populations who live and depend on the landscapes we collectively call home. By better weaving these critical strands together, conservation efforts will be far stronger and our societal tapestry far richer as a result.

NETWORK FOR LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

The Network is a national and cross-border hub and leading voice for supporting and advancing collaborative conservation at the necessary landscape scale. It connects people to ideas and innovations—and to each other—in order to accelerate the pace and practice of landscape conservation. The Network develops effective tools and advances best practices and policies to help people safeguard their imperiled landscapes. It also connects and amplifies the voices of its 30-person, cross-sector leadership team (including the Salazar Center), 150 organizational partners, and 3,000 individual members. It is fiscally sponsored by the Center for Large Landscape Conservation in Bozeman, MT.
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The Colorado State University Salazar Center for North American Conservation supports and advances the health and connectivity of the natural systems and landscapes of North America—be they urban or rural; working or wildlands; public or private. It knows that healthy natural systems support climate adaptation and resilience, protect biodiversity, and support long-term human health. Its intersectional approach builds bridges that connect academic research, community practice, and policy development.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed their time and expertise to this report, and we are pleased to express our appreciation and gratitude—as well as share how you can support the efforts of the featured organizations—on the inside back cover of this report.

On the cover: *Weaving by Odintsov Elena Innokentevna. Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock.*

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ACRONYMS

The following acronyms appear throughout this report.

BEITC	Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition
BES	Baltimore Ecosystem Study
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CDC	Community Development Corporation, Hopkins Park
CLF	Conservation Lands Foundation
CSU	Colorado State University
DEI	Diversity, equity, and inclusion
DMCF	Dredged-material containment facility
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
GBWC	Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition
INPC	Illinois Nature Preserves Commission
KBRA	Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement
KHSA	Klamath Hydropower Settlement Agreement
KRRC	Klamath River Renewal Corporation
LTER	Long-term ecological research
NCA	National Conservation Area
PCFFA	Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
PHP	Pembroke-Hopkins Park
PLI	Public Lands Initiative
SUWA	Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
TEK	Traditional ecological knowledge
TFM	The Field Museum of Natural History
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TWS	The Wilderness Society
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
YCC	Youth Conservation Corps

NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

In this document we use **Indigenous** as an inclusive term to describe Aboriginal Peoples, First Nations, Native Americans, and the people whose ancestors lived on what is now known as North America before European colonization. Where possible, we refer to Indigenous People using their self-determined approach to recognizing their Nation, Tribe, Clan, or Band. In the case of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, we use Indigenous peoples from the region's preferred terms of **Native American** and **Native** throughout the piece and refer directly to specific tribes or nations wherever possible.

We use **mainstream conservation** as a term to refer to environmental non-governmental organizations and public agencies whose staff, leadership, and boards are predominantly white and who subscribe to white cultural norms.

For examples on the use of 'mainstream conservation,' see:
- *Diversity and the Conservation Movement*, developed by the National Audubon Society (see page 8)
- Within mainstream environmentalist groups, diversity is lacking, from *The Washington Post*
- Environmental Justice: Moving Equity from Margins to Mainstream, from *Nonprofit Quarterly*

The term **marginalized community** is used to recognize groups of people sharing a geographic location who are facing oppression, exclusion, and disenfranchisement. Marginalized communities are made up of people who are denied involvement in economic, political, cultural, and social systems that provide access to opportunity, wealth, health, and other forms of well-being. Within the context of this report, the marginalized communities represented here are also communities comprised of people of color, or people who are of non-European descent. As such, a key component of marginalization for the communities profiled here is that they actively experience discrimination and exclusion due to unequal power relationships caused by policies, programs, and norms that systematically disadvantage Black, Indigenous, and other people of color within the United States.

For more on defining populations, see:
- *Populations and the Power of Language*, from the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health
- Marginalized populations, as defined by the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health

Other resources
- *2015 Race Reporting Guide*, from Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation
- *Equity Language Guide*, from Sierra Club

INTRODUCTION

MOVING TOWARDS A MORE DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

The land conservation movement in North America and across the globe is in the midst of a fundamental shift as people recalibrate conservation efforts to work at the landscape scale. People are working collaboratively to conserve and connect their home landscapes and the myriad of ecological, cultural, and community goods, services, and values they provide. Top-down and piecemeal efforts are being replaced with more inclusive, collaborative, and community-grounded approaches.

The conservation movement in the U.S. has had many celebrated successes. The National Park system, famously lauded as "America's best idea," and the 640 million acres of state and federal public lands that stretch across the country provide remarkable ecological, recreation, and cultural values—some of which were otherwise threatened by private exploitation and habitat degradation. However, often hidden within these legacies of success are how the benefit and burden of public lands and protected areas are unequally distributed. Many national parks were created through the theft of Indigenous lands and violent expulsion of Indigenous peoples from their homelands and territories.[1]

Yellowstone National Park recognizes that at least 26 different tribes used the area for trade, hunting, gathering, medicine, and ceremony before the U.S. Congress "gifted" 2.2 million acres to the American people to create the park.[2] Spurred by the compelling myth of the preservation of "pristine wilderness," places supposedly unaltered

Students spot a bald eagle at Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Photo courtesy of nps.gov.

by humankind left little room for the original inhabitants—Indigenous people who had long served as stewards of these landscapes. During the Jim Crow era, Shenandoah National Park and other recreation areas were segregated, and the consequences of these legacies present themselves today as a national park system that hosts predominantly white visitors, managed by one of the least diverse agencies in the federal government.[3] The national parks are just one example of how politics, and economics deeply shaped American conservation thought and how the underrepresentation of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color is mirrored across all facets of the conservation movement, including not-for-profit organizations, foundations, and federal agencies.[4]

The politics of race, power, and wealth have also been used to exclude Indigenous, Black, and Brown Americans from equally shaping and benefitting from myriad environmental values, including land ownership, clean air and water, access to green spaces and outdoor recreation, and more—all products of racist policies and programs that pervade our country's history.[5] It is time to address and reconcile these injustices and to recalibrate the land conservation movement as one for *all* people.

As part of this, we are shifting away from the false narrative of nature-versus-people and embracing the essential narrative of nature *and* people. By its very definition, this new era of collaborative landscape conservation includes the voices and values of all the people who live on those landscapes, including the populations traditionally overlooked and marginalized by the conservation community.

The historically white, elitist focus of the conservation movement has also hampered its success by ignoring important perspectives, undervaluing conservation issues that would benefit the broader population, and dismissing invaluable sources of traditional Indigenous knowledge that would have significantly shaped the movement and improved its outcomes. The consequences of the omission of marginalized people and perspectives from the conservation movement are seen in both the underrepresentation of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color in conservation organizations, agencies, and foundations, as well as in the narratives that are told about people's relationships with nature. Despite their exclusion from America's conservation movement and history, a number of studies demonstrate that people of color are deeply concerned about environmental issues such as climate change and highly value conservation.[6] In recent years, a number of groups have organized to promote diversity and inclusion in outdoor recreation and conservation. These groups, such as members of the Diversify Outdoors coalition like Outdoor Afro, Melanin Base Camp, Brown People Camping, Latino Outdoors, Pride Outside, Native Outdoors, and Native Women's Wilderness, to name a few, work to ensure outdoor recreation and natural spaces are accessible, safe, and welcoming to everyone.[7] In a similar vein, the environmental justice movement, long led and sustained by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other people of color, is further evidence that mainstream conservation's lack of diversity is not a product of disinterest, but rather systems of exclusion that produce a mainstream conservation sector run and staffed by people that are usually white and college educated.[8]

In the new era of collaborative landscape conservation, we are moving beyond the concepts of nature preserved without humans or of nature conserved for a few, to nature as essential for and inclusive of all. We are starting down the long and rocky path of righting historical wrongs and building a broad-based and enduring constituency for nature and for the many essential ecosystem services (air, water, health, climate resilience, community, economy, and more) it provides for all people, in all places. In order to be successful, we must intentionally continue to develop and weave into our

beliefs and practices the principles of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion as fundamental to the success of collaborative landscape conservation. The case studies and resources in this report serve as only one of many waypoints on this important journey.

Background on the case studies

The Network for Landscape Conservation and the Salazar Center for North American Conservation have teamed up to showcase four case studies that explore how principles of equity and inclusion can operate within and improve landscape conservation initiatives. The intention of this report is to authentically represent the hard-fought conservation battles and leadership efforts of diverse communities. In doing so, we explore how mainstream conservation organizations can work towards developing equitable and respectful relationships with communities who have long been overlooked by the conservation movement and who deserve their voices to be heard and their rights and values on the landscape to be recognized and restored.

> The politics of race, power, and wealth have been used to exclude Indigenous, Black, and Brown Americans from equally shaping and benefitting from myriad environmental values, and it is time to address and reconcile these injustices and to recalibrate the land conservation movement as one for *all* people.

The four case studies were chosen with geographic and cultural diversity in mind, as well as with an eye to different challenges faced by inclusive conservation efforts. The Bears Ears National Monument case study captures Indigenous connection to a culturally and spiritually invaluable landscape in the western United States. The Klamath River watershed in the Pacific Northwest is home to what used to be the Pacific Coast's third-largest salmon run, and the removal of four dams on the river lies at the heart of reconnecting tribes to their cultural and spiritual heritage. The Kankakee Sands in Northeastern Illinois is home to the world's largest remaining stand of black oak savanna and Black families who have stewarded this fragmented landscape for generations. Lastly, the Baltimore Wilderness case study tells a story of how urban conservation unfolds within a diverse city; it explores how addressing issues such as access barriers and community engagement is critical to building robust conservation initiatives and to creating programming that provides opportunities for all communities to be included.

In each of these examples, the communities at the heart of the story have worked tirelessly, and against all odds, to conserve their lands and cultures. Taken in sum, these four stories serve as living examples of how communities, conservation groups, and other organizations can find ways of working together in innovative new ways that advance conservation goals while respecting community autonomy and connections to the landscape in order to create enduring conservation and cultural gains. Interviews with the leaders of these initiatives and with other conservation stakeholders provide the primary content of these case studies, and we are deeply grateful to the many people who took time out of their busy schedules to share their insights with us.

Common themes and lessons learned for enduring conservation strength and success

Although each case study tells its own unique story, common threads also reveal themselves over the course of this project. These "lessons learned" are outlined below for the consideration and benefit of landscape conservation practitioners in North America and beyond. We hope that conservation

practitioners weave these lessons together with their own knowledge and processes to develop stronger partnership strands and richer societal tapestries in their own landscapes. Whether working locally or at the landscape scale, it is abundantly clear that in order to achieve equitable solutions, conservation must include all voices on the landscape.

1. *Support the leadership and broader engagement of marginalized populations*
In all four case studies, leadership and meaningful involvement by local communities led to far greater conservation success and strengthened conservation opportunities in the future.

2. *Establish respect and build/rebuild trust*
Establishing and maintaining trust takes many forms and depends on myriad factors, including social, political, and historical contexts, all involving different timescales and approaches. In the Klamath Basin, we see that the building of trust began with acknowledgement. Acknowledging others, particularly those with differing backgrounds and viewpoints, was an essential step towards creating an environment for productive dialogue. In Baltimore, we see efforts to build trust beginning by working with established community leaders and by creating a presence in the community. Of particular importance for conservation organizations, acknowledging past harm is key.[9] When one or both parties feel slighted by events in the past, these histories must be addressed before relationships can be rebuilt. Reconciliation can come in many forms: in the Klamath Basin, a simple "I'm sorry" from ranchers to Indigenous peoples set the stage for unprecedented collaboration. In Pembroke-Hopkins Park, The Nature Conservancy was able to reestablish trust by returning culturally significant land to the community. In each of these situations, specific actions were taken to address the core issues underlying distrust; these will be different in every community and take different historical, political, social, and cultural forms across different landscapes. While trust is gradually built over time, it is an essential ingredient for successful collaboration.

> "The most appropriate speed of collaboration is the speed of trust," says Kendall Edmo, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe who spoke at a Salazar Center workshop on working with diverse and rural communities.

3. *Empathetic listening*
While "meeting people where they are" is a common mantra in community engagement work, intentionality is key to successful and meaningful partnerships. For example, as the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition grew and worked to increase the intentionality of engagement efforts, partners realized that equitable access means something different in every community. As such, "listening to understand" is essential. This requires learning about the community's unique historical contexts and challenges and finding ways to incorporate community priorities into the vision and mission of the work.

4. *Sustain engagement*
Showing up and being there for the community is a key step in building trust. "When you drive up and they (landowners) wave 'hi' and know you by name, that's when you're building relationships," according to Kim Roman of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. Relationships that are built over time have proven to be the most successful in terms of achieving conservation targets on private land and landscape-scale conservation overall, where relationships and enduring results are built at the speed of trust.

5. *Relinquish credit*
Another tool for mainstream conservation organizations and agencies to build and sustain trust is to relinquish the need to be in the spotlight. Conservation organizations have long operated by promoting their work and taking credit for projects wherever they operate. However, such top-down practices leave local communities behind by overlooking their contributions. This practice ultimately perpetuates a culture of exclusion and disrespect. In the case of Bears Ears, respecting that Native American groups should take the lead in strategic decision-making and external communications has resulted in more enduring relationships and equitable results.

6. *Create neutral platforms for constructive communication and conversation*
A platform for ongoing communication is necessary to sustain newfound trust, and not all communication platforms are inclusive. For example, simply piling into a room and trying to have a conversation is not likely to result in much progress. Without intentional design, implicit biases, historic inequalities, and power dynamics—among many other unproductive factors—can derail opportunities for meaningful discussion. Neutral settings remove any "homefield advantage" that outside parties would view as unfavorable, or marginalized communities would view as disrespectful. (It remains far too common for mainstream conservation organizations to assume others will come to "their table.") For example, the Shilo Hotel where Jim Root was able to convene ranchers, tribesmen, and other stakeholders of the Klamath Basin was seen by all parties as a fair starting point. And, just as a neutral setting is key, so is a neutral moderator. The Field Museum (TFM) played this vital role in Pembroke-Hopkins Park while conducting their Quality of Life Report. Over time, landscape conservation partnerships that are formed should make sure to develop processes that address inequalities and properly value and include all people.

7. *Acknowledge and leverage traditional and local knowledge*
Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) held by many Indigenous peoples and local communities has been long dismissed but is increasingly acknowledged as essential to understanding and conserving landscapes. For example, the African American community in Pembroke-Hopkins Park has lived sustainably in a rare black oak savanna habitat for generations. They have been using fire as a management tool for years, not because Western science directs them to, but because they had learned through experience that it helps them steward their land more effectively. The use of TEK alongside Western science in the Klamath River Basin demonstrates how using multiple knowledge sources strengthens understanding of ecological processes, providing critical evidence in support of dam removal. In Bears Ears, traditional knowledge informs BEITC's management plan, ensuring the plan is both scientifically and culturally founded. Ensuring TEK and other forms of knowing are provided full weight and respect maximizes information sources and deepens understanding of sociocultural and ecological conditions.

8. *Tell your shared story, through the right storytellers*
Conservation initiatives are not just projects to be completed, but stories to be told in order to persuade decision-makers and effect change. A compelling story from the appropriate storyteller is a powerful tool for conservation practitioners. Whether it is the Klamath River restoration project, the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, the Pembroke partnership, or the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition, every landscape has extraordinary stories to tell about people, place, challenges, victories, and inspirations for the future.

9. Adapt perspectives and advance inclusive priorities

Charlotte Overby of the Conservation Lands Foundation (CLF) says that many conservation organizations look at landscapes and see them as places that can support wildlife or recreation that can help the local economy. In the case of Bears Ears, Overby says the landscape is viewed by tribes as a place to heal communities and a place to grow stronger families, spirituality, and cultural bonds. This more holistic viewpoint has informed the way in which CLF supports and lifts up the work of tribal partners. Others agreed that the idea of co-management—bringing together an Indigenous worldview and knowledge with a Western worldview and knowledge—is changing the nature of how we think about public land management and landscape conservation in an exciting way.

10. Diversify from within

Many interviewees from mainstream conservation organizations noted that they are working to become more diverse themselves at the staff and board levels, and to be more representative of the broader work and areas where they do conservation. Many acknowledged the historic and current imbalance of conservation organizations' staff, board, and their world experience, and the need to more intentionally move to a conservation movement that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive—starting with their own organizations. This will all take recalibration, time, sustained commitment, and funding. But fortunately, it is happening across the conservation field—and our landscapes, country, and planet will be the far better for it. From supporting leadership of marginalized people and building trust, to adapting perspectives and advancing inclusive priorities, 'diversity from within' embeds the previous nine lessons learned from our case studies into a structure that positions organizations to achieve more ambitious conservation outcomes in inclusive and equitable ways.

The red rock buttes of Bears Ears can be found in the southeastern corner of Utah and have been occupied by Native Americans for at least 13,000 years. Photo by Bob Wick/Bureau of Land Management, courtesy of Science magazine.

BEARS EARS

HOW AN INTER-TRIBAL COALITION AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE HAVE INFORMED LAND USE PLANNING

Wondrous though the natural formations are, the most profound aspect of Bears Ears is the Native presence that has blended into every cliff and corner. This spirit is the beating heart of Bears Ears.[1]

Background

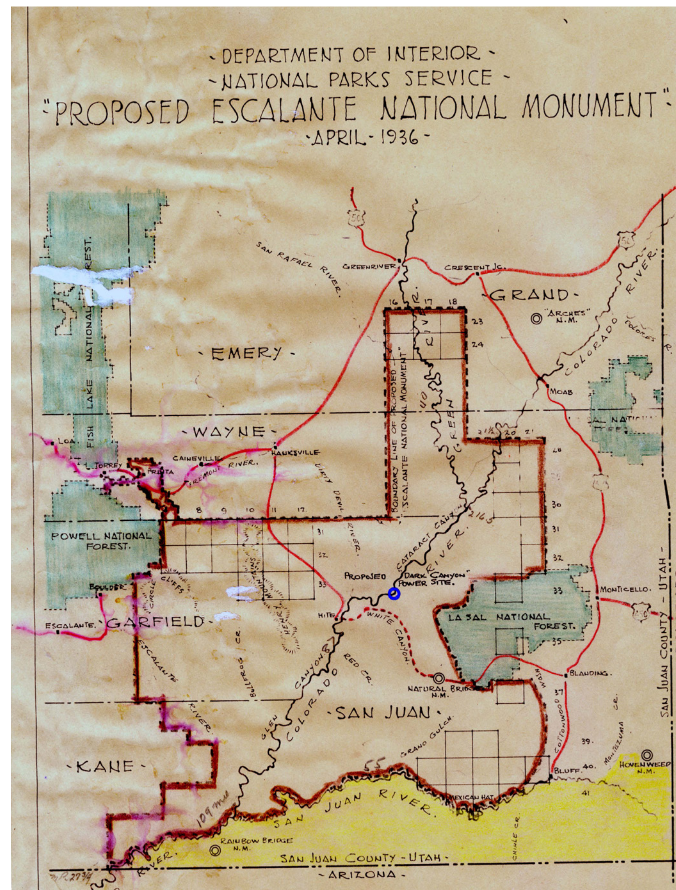
The Hopi Tribe calls this land *Hoon'Naqvut*; for the Diné or Navajo people, it is known as *Shash Jaa'*. For the Ute Tribe, it is *Kwiyagatu Nukavachi* and for the Pueblo of Zuni, *Ansh An Lashokdiwe*. In each language the words translate as "Bears Ears," due to two 8,000-foot mountain buttes that rise above the 1.9-million-acre landscape. The red rock landscape surrounding Bears Ears is the sacred ancestral lands of the Navajo Nation (Diné), Hopi Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe, and the Pueblo of Zuni, among others. The area has been occupied since time immemorial, including evidence of habitation by Paleoindian peoples dating back at least 13,000 years. Today, there are more than 100,000 documented cultural sites in the area,[2] a reflection of the rich history that persists despite federal policies in the 1800s and beyond meant to reduce and relocate Indigenous people and force the assimilation of remaining Native Americans into the settler culture.

Today, members of those tribes continue to share a deep cultural and spiritual connection to the landscape. As Shaun Chapoose, Ute Business Manager for the Ute Indian Tribe and member of the Bear's Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, has noted, the Tribes still use this land for subsistence hunting, gathering culturally significant plants and other objects for religious ceremonies, and to make

offerings to, and connect with, their ancestors:

> "Our cultures are everywhere within Bears Ears. The canyons and forests hold many of our stories. Family gatherings, dances, and ceremonies are held at special places within Bears Ears. Our tribal members go to Bears Ears to gather roots, berries, piñon nuts, weaving materials, and medicines. We go for healing. Stone cliff-dwellings, rock art and trails, testaments to the Old People, have survived thousands of years of wear and weather. Our ancestors are buried there, and we can hear their songs and prayers on every mesa and in each canyon."[3]

Today, the tribes continue to work to protect this sacred landscape from harm, buttressed by increasing political and mainstream conservation support, but with mixed results due to changing U.S. federal administrations and priorities.



Proposed map of the four-million-acre Escalante National Monument, 1936. Source: Schmieding, Samuel J. 2008. From Controversy to Compromise: The Administrative History of Canyonlands National Park. *National Park Service.*

Initiatives to date

A coherent management approach to this contested landscape has been elusive since efforts to create a national monument in the area in 1935, when then-Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes proposed the four-million-acre Escalante National Monument (a precursor to the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument that was designated in 1996). The resulting controversy reads like a prophesy of the dispute that would result from another national monument proposal (albeit for a much smaller area) 81 years later: "the rise and fall of the Escalante concept from 1935 to 1940 revealed the limits of preservationism and New Deal political capital, the importance of developing constituencies to support controversial policies, and the contentious nature of Utah politics."[4]

This effort pitted those interested in increasing recreational tourism in the state in order to rebuild Utah's economy after the Great Depression against those concerned about losing rights to mineral extraction, grazing, and water use. Needless to say, the ancestral rights of the Tribes were largely ignored at the time. Those in the group concerned with mineral extraction, grazing, and water use criticized the proposal to create a monument as an autarchic move that exceeded the authority of the federal government. Tourism advocates supported nationwide Depression-era efforts such as the creation of a greatly expanded system of national parks, which created much-needed jobs through the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The combination of Utah's dire economic situation due to low population and little sustained income during this time, and the vast amount of land that could support such projects, put Utah in a favorable position for CCC projects.[5] This included projects completed by the Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division, a Native American division of the CCC that had 746 enrollees that rotated through the 200 positions allotted for Utah over the nine-year period that the CCC program was in place.[6] This effort was part of an "Indian New Deal" that sought to reverse some of the harmful federal actions of the past that eroded Tribal sovereignty and led to increasing poverty on reservations.

In another portentous move, a 1964 proposal that created the much smaller Canyonlands National Park was centered not on preservation, but on the then-novel concept of multi-use land management that attempted to achieve balance among a variety of interests.[7] The first Tribal proposal seeking federal protection for the Bears Ears cultural landscape was presented to then-Utah Senator Bob Bennet in August of 2010. Bennett had solicited the input of Tribal leaders while working on his version of a land-use bill for San Juan County. Bennett lost the GOP nomination in 2011 before he was able to introduce this legislation.[8]

In 2013, Utah Republican representatives Rob Bishop and Jason Chaffetz began to draft legislation that would allegedly end the longstanding controversy and avoid a national monument designation for the area, which the Obama Administration had signaled it was considering. The resulting proposed Public Lands Initiative Act (PLI) covered an area of 18 million acres and included seven counties in southeastern Utah. The plan was publicized as an attempt to develop a management solution that considered the priorities of both those interested in economic development in the area and those concerned with preserving Utah's valued red rock landscape. Bishop and Chaffetz touted the process as balanced and locally driven, stating that over 1,200 stakeholders had been engaged in the drafting process, including conservation organizations, recreation groups, ranchers, energy industry representatives, and local Tribal leaders.[9] The PLI proposed the creation of a 1.1-million-acre National Conservation Area (NCA) in the Bears Ears landscape. The NCA designation was offered as a way to give local communities "greater flexibility for multiple uses and opportunities." The creation of a management plan for the NCA would be overseen by a Bears Ears Management Commission, which would include representatives from local Native American Tribes. While the process was ostensibly inclusive of sovereign Tribal governments' values, Tribal leaders' input was dismissed—or misrepresented—throughout the PLI process. As the testimony of the Ute Indian Tribe regarding the 2017 national monument reduction asserts, PLI representatives sought the counsel of individual Tribal members representing personal interests rather than honoring the special government-to-government Trust Responsibility between sovereign Tribal nations and the U.S. federal government.[10] A number of stakeholders, feeling their needs and priorities for the landscape were not being addressed, exited the process in 2016, including two counties and the Tribes. When Congressman Bishop introduced the bill in Congress in July of 2016, it failed to gain the support it needed to move forward, signaling the end of the PLI process.

Indigenous leadership at the center

A Tribal-led national monument proposal

When it became clear that the protracted PLI process was unlikely to result in a viable piece of legislation, local Tribal leaders from five sovereign Nations with ancestral connections to the Bears Ears landscape—the Navajo (Diné) Nation, Ute Mountain Ute, Ute Indian Tribe, Hopi Tribe, and Pueblo of Zuni—formalized the five-tribe Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition (BEITC). Tribal leaders modeled the BEITC after the four-tribe Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission[11], pointing to the success of the 40-year-old, Tribal-led effort to coordinate management of, advocate for, and provide scientific research about traditional salmon fisheries in the Pacific Northwest. The mission of the BEITC was to actively engage with federal agencies to create a co-management plan for the landscape.

President Barack Obama establishes Bears Ears National Monument in 2016. Photo courtesy of the Salt Lake Tribune.

Toward this aim, the BEITC crafted a proposal for a national monument that would ensure Native values were clearly represented in any land management actions in the area. The Native-developed and -led proposal was historically unprecedented. As the Navajo non-profit group Utah Diné Bikéyah notes, although the Antiquities Act of 1906 was created to protect Indigenous artifacts, this was the first time Native Americans had initiated a proposal to invoke those protections.[12] The initial Tribal proposal to the Obama Administration encompassed 1.9 million acres surrounding the iconic Bears Ears buttes. The boundaries of the proposed monument were collaboratively developed by area Tribes and were also informed by a three-year-long ethnographic mapping initiative carried out by Utah Diné Bikéyah from 2010-2013 as part of an effort to gain recognition of Tribal interests in land use planning efforts in Utah—such as the PLI—by educating political leaders, agency representatives, and residents about traditional Navajo values surrounding the red rock landscape. Information about the landscape was gathered in the form of interviews with Tribal Elders and Medicine Men and other knowledge-holders, as well as a biological assessment of the area.[13]

On December 28, 2016, in the final days of his presidency, President Barack Obama created the Bears Ears National Monument. The monument encompassed 1.35 million acres of land, the boundaries of which were an effort by the Obama Administration to strike a compromise between those proposed during the failed PLI Act and the 1.9-million-acre area proposed by the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition. In his Presidential Proclamation designating the monument, President Obama called this area one of the "densest and most significant cultural landscapes in the United States," adding that, while its physical artifacts held value for all Americans, "most notably the land is profoundly sacred to many Native American Tribes."[14] As was the case with the 1936 proposal, the 2016 national monument designation was seen by some as a unilateral decision that excluded input from local officials and Tribal members not represented by the BEITC. Some of these Tribal members oppose the monument for fear that protected status will impact their ability to continue to access the resources the land provides, including the right to collect medicinal plants and pursue energy development opportunities.[15]

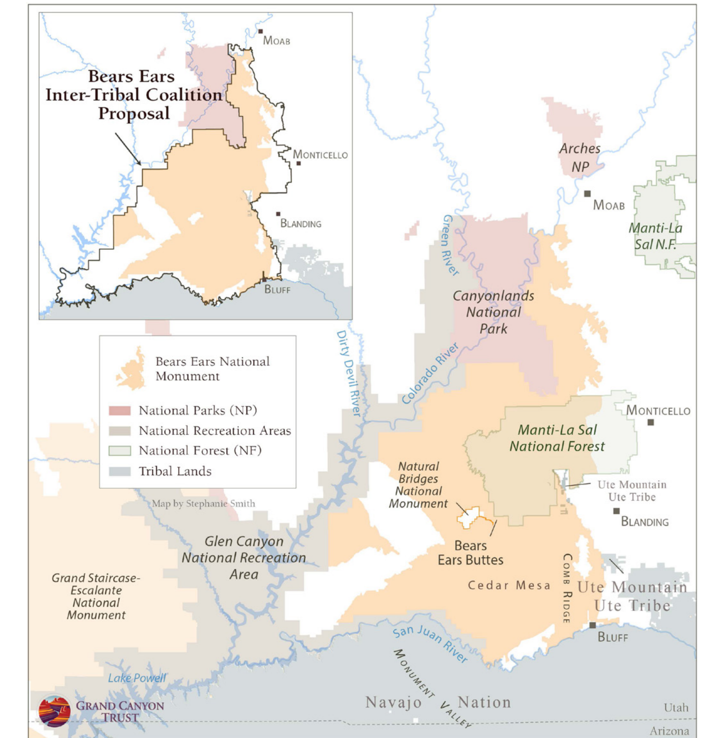
A landscape divided

Eleven months later in 2017, President Donald Trump issued a proclamation reducing the size of the monument by 1.1 million acres (a decrease of 85% in size) and dividing the site into two smaller management units, citing a desire to reverse federal overreach. This was the first time since 1963 that a U.S. president had sought to reduce the size of a national monument, and it was the largest reduction of a monument in the nation's history. The five Tribal Nations represented by the BEITC, along with other monument supporters, are suing the Trump administration over what they see as a breach of presidential authority.[16] However, the BEITC is not a plaintiff in any of the lawsuits and is instead deeply focused on moving forward with an Indigenous traditional knowledge-informed land management plan for the original 1.9 million acres proposed by the Nations of BEITC to the Obama Administration.

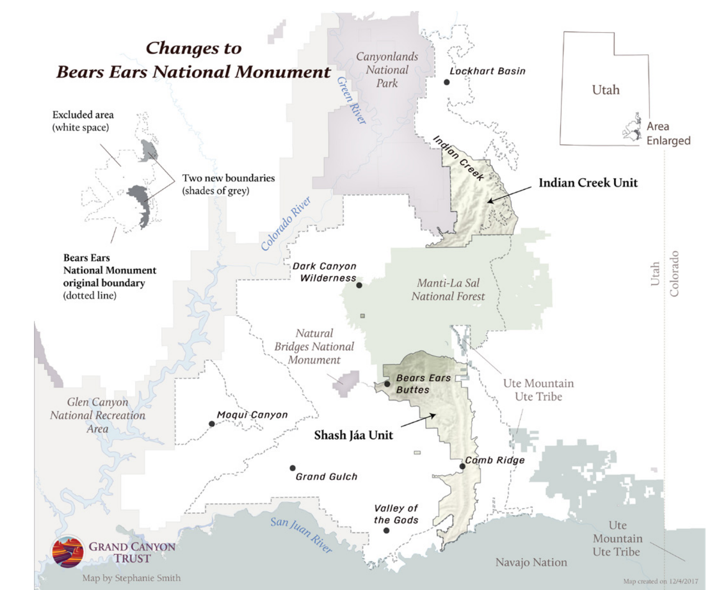
In February of 2020, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) finalized a management plan for the two management areas of the reduced monuments, Shash Jáa and Indian Creek. This plan reduces the role

of the BEITC from one of close collaboration to one of consultation and provides only superficial opportunities for input like the two seats available for "Tribal Interests" on the Monument Advisory Committee (MAC). Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye argued that the Tribal Management Council provision for the reduced monument "is 'Tribal' in name only."[17] The federal government's management plan, along with the reduction of the original monument boundaries, are the subjects of ongoing lawsuits.

There is disagreement regarding the economic and environmental impact a monument designation will have on surrounding communities and the landscape. Opponents of a larger monument, including the Trump Administration, say that the area is an important source of energy resources, the exploitation of which provides vital income for the surrounding rural communities. Others argue that recreation and tourism, boosted by an expanded monument, are more economically sustainable than the destabilizing boom-and-bust nature of natural resource-dependent economies. Extractive and other natural resource industry representatives argue that, if done correctly, exploiting these resources poses no threat to the environment or existing practices. Environmental groups, however, argue that in order to maintain the landscape's ecological integrity, lands must be managed at ecologically sensitive and meaningful scales that maintain landscape connectivity. There is also growing awareness and support of the ancestral rights and cultural importance to the Tribes who lived on this land, a set of issues long disparaged and dismissed by settler-colonial culture and governments of the communities, states, and federal government.



President Barack Obama designated 1.35 million acres as Bears Ears National Monument in 2016; inset: the larger 1.9-million-acre area proposed by the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition. Map courtesy of Grand Canyon Trust.



Less than a year after the Obama Administration's designation, Bears Ears National Monument was reduced by more than 80% by President Donald Trump. Map courtesy of Grand Canyon Trust.

The Indigenous-led Bears Ears National Monument proposal represents a welcome evolution in conservation in that it is not centered upon the traditional dominant culture conservation/preservation viewpoint. Instead, the core issue is one of Tribal sovereignty and the Tribes' right to manage the land. The five Tribal Nations that comprise the BEITC, as well as many others that have

A gathering of the BEITC and other Monument advocates. Photo by Tim Peterson, courtesy of Grand Canyon Trust.

a cultural connection to the landscape and have pledged their support to the BEITC-led national monument proposal, see this land as sacred. To date, 30 Tribes have pledged support to protecting the Bears Ears landscape for all future generations. In addition to many historically and culturally significant sites, the landscape provides plants that are used as traditional medicines, and the plants and animals in the area support Tribes' ongoing subsistence practices.[18]

While the monument has received overwhelming public support and is backed by a majority of Tribal members, Tribal sentiment regarding the monument designation is not homogenous. The BEITC and many others in the Native American community see a monument designation as the surest way to protect valuable cultural sites representing a direct connection with their ancestors, as well as the lands still used for ceremonial purposes and to collect traditional medicines, foods, and firewood. Other members of the Tribal community view the move as unnecessary or even harmful because they believe a national monument will draw more visitors to important cultural sites, leading to further damage of those sites. Still others believe that protected status will impact their ability to continue to access the resources the land provides, including the right to pursue energy development opportunities.[19]

The founding of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition in 2015 by leaders from the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and Ute Indian Tribe was a powerful moment. The Coalition represents a historic consortium of sovereign Tribal nations united in the effort on multiple fronts to work collaboratively to protect and promote sacred, spiritual, historical, natural, scientific,

and cultural resources on lands within the Bears Ears landscape. It has also provided a respectful and effective way for non-native organizations and community leaders to become involved.

Despite the political upheavals and associated lawsuits, the Coalition has moved forward with work on an Indigenous-led, traditional knowledge-informed land management plan for the original 1.9 million acres called for in the original Bears Ears National Monument proposal to the Obama Administration. It is the BEITC's belief that approaching land management in a culturally sensitive way that includes traditional management approaches will produce a plan that is both economically and environmentally sound: good for both the land and the people who rely upon it. The Utah Diné Bikéyah ethnographic mapping effort included extensive outreach to Native communities during which the many Indigenous uses of the land were documented. Also documented were areas where current and past uses threatened land health. The resulting map boundary indicated what the Tribes determined was "the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects we believe should be protected" by the Bears Ears National Monument designation.[20]

Patrick Rogers-Gonzales, the Executive Director for the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, says the Tribes' vision is to begin with an overarching management plan framework for the area, or a "manifesto" as Rogers-Gonzales calls it, that emphasizes the Native perspective about the land. This framework can then be filled in iteratively, using existing conservation organizations' scientific data sets for the area or working with those organizations to collect additional data. In addition, Native subject matter experts will engage in a peer review process to collate and vet information. As Rogers-Gonzales notes, traditional Native and Western scientific knowledge are complementary: "A Native mentality and practice are central to the plan. The management plan is focused on representing the traditional Native way [of managing the land] and marrying it with the best Western science." As part of the land management plan, the BEITC is currently working on a climate change adaptation and resilience report. As Rogers-Gonzales notes, "The thing with climate change and Indian Country is that these people are among the most vulnerable. If we could include something like Grand Staircase (in the management plan), then you are talking about including three to four million acres. It makes it far more productive to do this kind of activity in Indian Country. It is also easy to transfer climate change efforts to traditional knowledge. The two fit together seamlessly. It makes sense to do this work in Indian Country where there is a focus on Native traditional knowledge."[20]

Ultimately, Gonzales-Rogers says that including Native voices in the management decision-making process is not only practical, it is the ethical thing to do. The BEITC monument proposal and the related management plan are not traditional preservation or conservation efforts and are instead driven by issues of Tribal sovereignty, and an agreement to accept the Tribal proposal and a Federal-Tribal co-management scheme for the monument would be unprecedented. As the BEITC proposal states, this could make the Bears Ears National Monument a "shining example of the trust, the government-to-government relationship, and innovative, cutting-edge land management." Further, the proposal argues that, "[t]he Tribes, through their deep knowledge of this land, their scientists, their land managers, and their artists and poets and songs, will help present this sacred area to the world in a way that cannot possibly be done without their partnership."[11]

Lessons learned

Working in the Bears Ears landscape has required mainstream conservation organizations to shift their approach to addressing environmental issues in order to be both culturally respectful and ecologically successful. Rather than achieving outcomes by increasing their visibility through media

coverage, community organizing events, and legislative interventions, groups working in the area are organizing around Tribal-led objectives in order to respect and leverage the influence and agency of Tribal nations in this culturally, geographically, and politically diverse landscape.

Engaging in culturally significant landscapes as an integrated whole

Charlotte Overby, Senior Program Director at of the Conservation Lands Foundation (CLF), a conservation advocacy group that focuses on community-based action in BLM-managed National Conservation Lands, notes that working in the Bears Ears landscape has required a change in the way the organization views public lands. She says that many conservation organizations look at these landscapes and see them as places that can support wildlife or recreation that can help the local economy. In the case of Bears Ears, Overby says the landscape is also viewed by Indigenous people as a place to heal communities and a place to grow stronger families, connections, and bonds. This more holistic viewpoint has informed the way in which CLF supports and lifts up the work of Tribal partners.

Utah Diné Bikéyah, a local Native-led nonprofit and longtime partner of CLF, hosted a summer gathering at Bears Ears for Tribes across the Southwest to foster healing after Trump reduced the monument by 85% in 2017. CLF provided support for the gathering and for a subsequent Indigenous food program to reintroduce culturally important crops to the area and engage youth in Indigenous food production. Overby says that supporting this initiative allowed Utah Diné Bikéyah to pursue their own programming. She has learned that in this landscape and era, CLF has had to embrace new cultural humility, removing themselves from the center of efforts to protect Bears Ears and to "let Native people consider the future, and future generations, together with the past in a big, grand sweep, and make decisions [about managing this landscape] based on that experience."

Tim Peterson, Cultural Landscapes Program Director of the Grand Canyon Trust, a regional organization that seeks to safeguard the wonders of the Grand Canyon and the Colorado Plateau while supporting the rights of Native peoples, also stresses how important it is to think of these landscapes not as a collection of disconnected sites of archeological or historical interest. He says it is common for individuals working to preserve such sites to ask Tribal leaders to simply "circle important sites" on a map while not realizing the interconnected nature of the entire landscape: "The entire landscape functions as a cultural landscape. Sites relate to the landforms, which relate to the plants, which relate to the rivers and streams and the way water flows. And the formations are just as significant as the cliff dwellings. There's no differentiation between the reservation boundaries, BLM boundaries, Forest Service boundaries, or private land boundaries. The entire system functions together."

Elevating the Tribal perspective

Katie's part should say: "Katie Meehan, Policy and Planning Specialist at The Wilderness Society (TWS), says that she has learned that in working with the Inter-Tribal Coalition, it is not enough to call yourself an ally. Rather, organizations should approach partnerships with the willingness to "help every step of the way" rather than simply voicing their solidarity. For The Wilderness Society, this has meant actions such as directing media requests, which would normally provide important opportunities for TWS to increase visibility for their interests, to the Inter-Tribal Coalition so the Tribes are leading the conversation. In addition, TWS has awarded capacity-building grants to the Inter-Tribal Coalition that are not directly tied to its organizational objectives. In this way, Meehan says, the organization has tried to step back and provide support that elevates Tribal leaders' priorities in the landscape rather than those of TWS.

Petroglyphs near the San Juan River. Photo by Tim Peterson, courtesy of Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition.

> "We're not in charge. We're not the leaders. The sovereign nations of the BEITC are the leaders. They set the course, they set the direction, we could offer advice and guidance and work towards what they were interested in, but this was a campaign led by leaders of nations, and we were very much subordinate to them. We served at their pleasure," says Tim Peterson of the Grand Canyon Trust.

Regional community organizer Terri Martin of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA) reiterates this lesson. She notes that for conservation advocates who are accustomed to being out front during a campaign, and who seek to shape messaging around a landscape, Bears Ears has been different. She says that SUWA is working to stand behind the Inter-Tribal Coalition, not only in order to bolster the Indigenous-led national monument effort, but also as a show of respect for Tribal sovereignty. Martin sees this as an opportunity to recognize that public lands were all once Indigenous lands. This kind of Indigenous land acknowledgement is a way to support the Inter-Tribal Coalition's message that area Tribes have been stewards of this landscape from time immemorial and that they have a deep, enduring relationship with the land. Further, it acknowledges that the view of wilderness as pristine and empty is a social construction that ignores the fact that Tribal inhabitants

were removed in order to support this romanticized, anglicized view of natural landscapes.[20] Like the Inter-Tribal Coalition, Martin also sees the protection of Bears Ears as a unique opportunity to highlight the Tribes' work in joining traditional Indigenous and Western scientific knowledge to create a landscape-scale management plan.

Similarly, Tim Peterson emphasizes that it is crucial for conservation groups working as part of an Indigenous-led effort to acknowledge and engage with Tribes as sovereigns and recognize the very powerful government-to-government Trust Relationship that exists between the federal and Tribal governments. "We're not in charge. We're not the leaders. The sovereign nations of the [Bears Ears Inter-Tribal] Coalition are the leaders. They set the course, they set the direction, we could offer advice and guidance and work towards what they were interested in, but this was a campaign led by leaders of nations, and we were very much subordinate to them. We served at their pleasure. And that can sometimes be [a challenging shift]."

Rethinking public land management

The Bears Ears landscape has afforded conservation leaders working as part of the national monument campaign a different way of looking at public lands—and landscape conservation in general. Peterson says that his long history in the region, and his organization's long-time commitment to supporting Tribal work, has given him an appreciation for the complex histories encompassed within landscapes and the diversity of views connected to them. As he reflects, "it's been really significant to me because it has made me realize that there's so much more to the management of public lands, which are also ancestral lands, than what federal land managers and what Western science consider and how we do it. And that's really the long-term goal of my particular program is to take this model, to make it much more robust, to grow and expand it, and to make the management of public lands far more Native-driven than they have been."

At a broader level, SUWA's Terri Martin echoes the BEITC's Pat Gonzales-Rogers's view that the Bears Ears landscape provides immense potential to rethink the way we manage landscapes. When talking about the co-management plan the Inter-Tribal Coalition is currently developing, Martin notes, "This idea of co-management—bringing together an Indigenous worldview and knowledge with a Western worldview and knowledge—I think is changing the nature of how we think about public lands and public land management, and that's really exciting."

Katie Meehan also sees this as a valuable opportunity for organizations such as The Wilderness Society to learn more about supporting and including Indigenous knowledge in their conservation work. "The Wilderness Society is striving to focus more on respecting and incorporating traditional knowledge into land management and protection, and this is an opportunity to try and exercise that intention that we really value and are grateful for."

In closing

While the future of the Bears Ears National Monument is uncertain, the initiative to create and protect the monument provides important lessons to be learned and opportunities to rethink land management. The Inter-Tribal Coalition has created a new precedent for Tribal cooperation in Indigenous-led land protection efforts. The Obama proclamation establishing the monument was the first in history to include such an emphasis on collaborative management rather than consultation. The Bears Ears landscape represents a unique opportunity to combine Western scientific natural resource management practices with traditional ecological knowledge at a landscape scale, using a

plan that represents the combined vision of five historically disparate Tribes.
In addition, the national monument designation and subsequent fight against its reduction have provided an opportunity for mainstream conservation groups to rethink their role in conserving and protecting culturally significant Indigenous landscapes. They are using the Bears Ears initiative to bring public attention to the crucially important issue of Tribal sovereignty. Organizations working in the area have demonstrated the ways in which conservation groups can unite behind Tribal leadership and have a more intentional approach to lifting up the work of Native-led efforts rather than working at cross purposes to reach their individual objectives. This kind of concerted effort in support of Tribal initiatives and heightened respect of their Tribal sovereignty and ancestral rights provides a beacon of hope for an evolving land conservation movement that is more aware of its own history and the need for fundamental change.

The Klamath River flows 257 miles through Oregon and northern California and empties into the Pacific Ocean. Photo by Bob Wick/Bureau of Land Management, courtesy of doi.gov.

KLAMATH RIVER

HOW A DAM REMOVAL PROJECT HAS FOUND SUCCESS THROUGH THE COLLABORATION OF TRADITIONALLY AT-ODDS STAKEHOLDERS

Background

Landscapes are the canvas on which ecology and culture make their mark, and there are few animal species that connect landscapes and cultures as well as salmon. On the Klamath River in Oregon and California, this anadromous fish, born in the mountains and living at sea until returning to its place of birth to spawn, has supported the Yurok, Karuk, Hoopa Valley, and Klamath Tribes. These Tribes depend on the annual salmon run on the Klamath River for their spiritual, cultural, and economic well-being, and for thousands of years lived in balance with the salmon and associated lands and waters. This balance was abruptly disrupted in the early 1800s following the arrival of European settlers and trappers.

Indigenous peoples were displaced and disparaged through colonial violence, and their land base shrunk to reservations just fractions of the size of the original territories. Access to the Klamath River was greatly diminished. Although some Tribal rights have been acknowledged and/or re-established through lengthy political and legal battles, access to the river and its resources still remains limited and has not been allocated equitably amongst the Tribes. Today, this history presents itself on the landscape in the form of four dams that have smothered Tribal identities and damaged the Klamath Basin ecosystem as well as the health and well-being of the Yurok, Karuk, Hoopa Valley, and Klamath Tribes.[1]

Dead salmon along the Klamath River on Oct. 1, 2002, near Klamath, CA. Photo by Martin Do Nascimento, courtesy of Earthjustice.

Beginning in 1908, the river faced enormous challenges as a series of hydroelectric dams were built by the California and Oregon Power Company (Copco), now known as PacifiCorp. The construction and operation of these dams persisted despite the senior water rights held by Tribes. Coho and Chinook salmon, both of which are keystone species of the Klamath Basin, are now listed as threatened and are candidate species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). This precipitous salmon decline is due to dam-related degraded habitat conditions, including insufficient water flows, algal blooms from warm, stagnant water, and lack of access to traditional spawning territory.

Decades of contentious litigation followed, focused both on Tribal water rights and on agricultural water loss resulting from Endangered Species Act decisions. But since 2016, a stakeholder-focused settlement plan has been on track to improve salmon habitat through the removal of the four dams along the Klamath River (although a July 2020 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission decision has added new uncertainty). The settlement would open up more than 400 miles of river for salmon runs and spawning and would also help revitalize the overall landscape. This dam removal effort—the largest dam removal and salmon restoration project ever proposed in the United States—is the result of cooperation between many individuals and groups and decades of challenging conversations. At the forefront of these conversations has been the collective voice of Tribes within the Klamath watershed: the Yurok, Karuk, Hoopa Valley, and Klamath Tribes. Economic factors, such as cost savings for PacifiCorp, and institutional factors, including the Endangered Species Act and the Yurok Tribe's declaration of personhood for the Klamath River in 2018 (also a first for a river in the United States), have also played key roles in advancing the dam removal settlement.[2] Growing support from mainstream environmental groups and political leaders as well as some unexpected partners have further fueled momentum for the removal project.

Initiatives to date

At the heart of the Klamath River battle is decades of disregard for Tribal sovereign rights and ancestral needs, as well as chronic federal over-promising of water that could never meet all ecological, cultural, spiritual, and economic needs of the communities throughout the Basin. A few key events of the past two decades of resource-based conflict are critical to understanding the current state of the Klamath River, its dams, its many stakeholders, and how an ambitious dam removal project has finally been able to gain significant traction and support.

Salmon baking the traditional way. Photo courtesy of Karuk Tribe.

2001 - Drought, ESA-related water delivery curtailments, and farmer protests

In 2001, following the first of several severe droughts, the Bureau of Reclamation reestablished sufficient water levels in the Klamath River to help restore endangered Shortnose and Lost River Suckerfish and threatened Coho salmon. This decision resulted in reduced water allocations for irrigation throughout the region and caused a major disruption in and hardship for the livelihoods of local ranchers and farmers. Ranchers and farmers protested the new allocations by symbolically passing buckets of water from the river into irrigation ditches. This protest, dubbed the Bucket Brigade, drew more than 20,000 people, including state representatives from Oregon, putting the Klamath River and Klamath Basin communities in the national spotlight.

2002 - Fish Kill

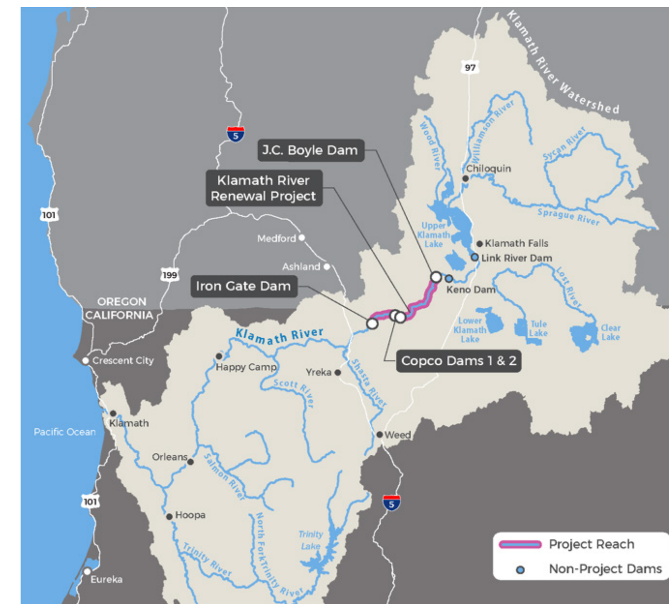
A continued drought into 2002 resulted in a release of water from Klamath Lake into the river. This reservoir water release, with above-average temperatures and toxic levels of algae, was fatal to the anadromous salmon that returned to their spawning grounds that year. Tens of thousands of salmon died before spawning.[3] The resulting fishery decline in the following years impacted Tribal, commercial, and recreational fishing industries, through reduced allocations, disappearing Tribal ceremonies, and even closed seasons.

2010 - Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA)

The first restoration agreement in the Klamath Basin was the product of years of dialogue among historically at-odds stakeholders. Their goals were to create sustainable rural communities throughout the Klamath Basin by reducing agricultural water consumption in an orderly and sustainable manner, providing funding for large-scale water quality improvements, implementing fish habitat improvement projects, and ultimately, clearing the way for dam removal. Individuals like Aawok Troy Fletcher, a leader from the Yurok Tribe; Jim Root, a local leader in the ranching community; and Becky Hyde, a rancher on the Sycan River, as well as many others, created a forum for ranchers and Tribal members to come together, understand each other, and negotiate. This broad

convening of stakeholders allowed for input from a variety of perspectives, especially long-ignored Tribal input, and the forum created a platform for a productive dialogue, paving the way for progress towards common goals for the first time. The resulting agreement included new water allocations for irrigation, land allocations for Tribes, funding for watershed restoration projects, and a dam removal proposal. Predicated upon congressional approval, the KBRA eventually died in Congress due to resistance from local congressional leaders in Oregon.

2016 - Klamath Hydropower Settlement Agreement (KHSA)
To continue the momentum of the 2010 KBRA, the first version of the KHSA was drafted with provisions that were acceptable to the remaining stakeholders at the negotiating table and also required congressional legislation to avoid becoming held up in the bureaucracy of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The Hoopa Valley Tribe and other stakeholders who did not participate in the KHSA negotiations felt that the compromises made during KBRA negotiations left them with little to negotiate; thus the new agreement began as a nonstarter for them. When it became clear that no congressional legislation would be passed supporting either the KBRA or the KHSA, the KHSA was modified so that congressional approval would not be necessary. Instead, the removal of PacifiCorp's four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath would be accomplished through the creation of a non-profit corporation whose sole purpose would be to assume the federal license from PacifiCorp and remove the dams. The non-profit Klamath River Renewal Corporation (KRRC) was created for that purpose.



Project vicinity map of the Klamath River Renewal Project. Map courtesy of the Klamath River Renewal Corporation (KRRC), klamathrenewal.org.

Under the Amended Settlement Agreement, PacifiCorp would transfer the license for the project to KRRC, which would then assume all legal and financial responsibility for dam removal. Absolving PacifiCorp of liability and potential cost overruns was a key incentive for the company. Dam removal funding would come from a rate surcharge on PacifiCorp customers (~$200 million) and additional funds from the State of California (~$250 million). Ratepayers would save money because the hydropower would be replaced by more cost-effective and climate-friendly options. FERC regulates all federal hydropower licenses and has never transferred a license from a private company or utility into the hands of a non-profit. The hope was that, if successful, this model would stand as a blueprint for future dam removals across the country.

After a very prolonged four-year review, FERC issued a mixed ruling in July 2020, approving the license transfer—a major victory—but requiring PacifiCorp to continue on as a "co-licensee" of the dams. This has undercut the delicate balance of the deal. The path forward remains possible but more complicated, with PacifiCorp balking at the new terms and threatening to pull out because their liability and costs have not been neatly terminated. But in the meantime, the ecological clock is ticking as the health of the river and the associated salmon runs continue to diminish. As Russell 'Buster' Attebery, Chairman of the Karuk Tribe, and Joseph L. James, Chairman of the Yurok Tribe, noted in a joint op-ed advocating against delay in removing the dams in 2021-2022: "For us, dam removal is absolutely necessary to restore our struggling fisheries, maintain cultural practices, and provide Tribal members who struggle to make ends meet access to traditional subsistence foods.... [Delay] will drive Klamath salmon ever closer to extinction, which will have profound economic and cultural implications for Tribes, commercial fishing families, and the agricultural community."[4] In other words, as PacifiCorp stalls, the ecological system remains in increasing danger of collapse and with it, the numerous cultural, spiritual, and economic needs of the Klamath River Tribes.

Fortunately, over the past two decades, dam removal has gained significant cross-sector and political traction, in large part because of Tribal leadership and perseverance. There is cautious optimism among stakeholders that broad-based and growing commitment—and increasing acknowledgment of Tribal needs and rights—will lead to a final agreement and dam removal in the near future. In November of 2020, the governors of California and Oregon announced a new deal with PacifiCorp and the Karuk and Yurok Tribes reviving momentum for dam removal. The new agreement, which requires approval from FERC, replaces Pacificorp's co-licensee responsibilities with the states of Oregon and California, circumventing opposition from Pacificorp and providing critical support to KRRC.[5] Success, once again, appears to be on the horizon.

Cross-cultural communication

The movement to remove the four dams on the Klamath River would not exist without the leadership

Yurok Tribal Vice Chairman David Gensaw, Jr. greets U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, 2016. Photo by Will Houston, courtesy of Eureka Times-Standard.

Yurok Tribal Chair Thomas O'Rourke speaks at the signing of the revised Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement and the Klamath Power and Facilities Agreement, 2016. Photo by Mark McKenna, courtesy of North Coast Journal.

from the Tribes and their longstanding legal and political fights to regain their stolen sovereign and ancestral rights. The Yurok and Karuk Tribes in particular have played invaluable roles in the effort to have the dams removed. Nearly every interviewee indicated that this project would not exist were it not for the efforts of the Tribes. While the Yurok and Karuk have been outspoken against the dams since their construction, opposition from 2000 onward has seen an increase in organized strategic activity and progress. For example, Klamath Basin Tribes began protesting the dams in 2004 at the headquarters of ScottishPower during their annual shareholder meetings. When ScottishPower sold the dams to Berkshire Hathaway in 2005 and annual shareholder meetings were moved to Omaha, NE, the protests followed. In an effort to raise awareness of the impacts that the dams have on the Klamath Basin Tribes, participants demonstrated the traditional role of salmon by cooking the fish on redwood sticks next to a wood fire, illustrating the Tribes' reliance on salmon.

Participation and leadership from the Tribes also extends beyond a united voice of protest. For any dam to be removed, scientific data and monitoring is key. Baseline monitoring must be established so that scientists have data to support dam removal, and changes following dam removal must also be measured. The Yurok Tribe has been especially involved in monitoring water levels and flows, turbidity, and other quality measures. The Tribe's comprehensive research and monitoring will be essential in procuring final approval from FERC for dam removal. The Tribes' technical knowledge of the river has also been foundational to the approval process from FERC's perspective. Data needs are also supported by universities and non-profit organizations in the region, but it is the Tribes' historic monitoring that serves as the primary source of data for the dam removal process. In addition to the Tribal monitoring programs, traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is also being accorded long-overdue value by FERC in restoration and conservation conversations surrounding dam removal.

When working on landscape-scale conservation projects, duplication of work can be avoided and greater efficiencies can be achieved by leveraging existing knowledge from lived experiences and perspectives that have been developed over generations, all of which contribute to a richer outcome. This knowledge can come in many forms and does so especially in the Klamath Basin. For example, Indigenous peoples, as traditional stewards of their lands, have a working knowledge of the land that

has been cultivated and passed down for generations. TEK is viewed and accepted as viable science for FERC in this instance, and it has been used in conservation planning in other cases throughout the country. For example, Inuit and Chukotka Tribes collaborated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in helping get the polar bear listed as threatened through the ESA by leveraging TEK.[6] In addition, the Tribes in the Klamath Basin, especially the Yurok, have been documenting the Klamath River for years using best scientific practices. The Yurok Tribe has more biologists working on the river than the state of California due to their geographical proximity and their specific interest in the Basin. It is primarily the Yurok's body of work that is informing the technical requirements of FERC. It is this blend of traditional and technical knowledge that the KRRC has depended on so far to make the case for the transfer of dam ownership and their eventual removal.

Removal of the four dams on the Klamath River has been a Tribal goal and directive since they were first built 100 years ago. In working towards this goal, the Tribes in the Klamath Basin have worked to garner support from groups whose interests in healthy salmon runs align, such as Trout Unlimited and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA). In addition, former adversaries in the farming and ranching communities have increasingly found economic and ecological common ground with the Tribes, as they collectively built hard-fought relationships and respect through the stakeholder processes. Fishermen, mainstream environmental groups, and researchers are also members of this growing stakeholder coalition. This diverse group of stakeholders is far greater than the sum of its parts and greatly benefits from Tribal leadership and the sovereign rights perspective, as allied members work together for positive cultural, ecologic, and economic Klamath River outcomes. It has been a very long and hard-fought journey for the Klamath River Tribes, and it is not yet over. While they have many more political, legal, and environmental partners on the journey with them now, there is growing support for revitalizing the health of the Klamath River—including ensuring the future of the sacred and economically and culturally important salmon runs.

Lessons learned

Create a platform for building trust and communication

As Glen Spain, director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Association puts it, in the beginning Tribal leaders and ranchers would, at the order of the courts, sit down at a table and not speak a word for hours. That type of dialogue, or lack thereof, is unsurprisingly not conducive to progress. It took the creation of a platform of open and honest communication for a real conversation to begin. Voices must be heard for progress, but without the understanding and respect of the person sitting across the table, this goal is out of reach. Buster Attebery, chairman of the Karuk Tribe, described what Tribes want the agricultural community to understand as, "This education is about telling the whole story, not just us fishing and eating, but about our culture as well." Jim Root saw an opportunity to improve relationships and worked to create a space for more productive conversation by moving out of sight of the media, establishing ground rules, creating an inclusive setting, and by inviting at-odds groups to break bread together. As a neutral intermediary, Root was instrumental in setting the stage for challenging yet respectful discussions. These conversations are not easy, and Attebery continues, "one thing we've learned is that we have to make sure we are talking about water, about the facts. We run into trouble when we start talking about each other."

What resulted from these early conversations was a compelling and unified momentum for dam removal as long as it was coupled with other negotiated benefits that included a water-sharing agreement, affordable power for farm operations, and a dispute resolution process that kept parties out of the courtroom. As KRRC Community Liaison and former congressional staffer Dave Meurer

Water trickles over a dam on the Klamath River outside Hornbrook, CA. Photo by Jeff Barnard / Associated Press, courtesy of Los Angeles Times.

now puts it, “when you have these groups that are usually fighting join hands and come to you with a solution, it’s a real attention-getter.” A unified voice around a common goal will always be more effective for conservation outcomes. Though the initial 2010 agreement that resulted from these conversations fell apart in the eleventh hour, the dialogue has continued. A new platform for communication, the Coalition of the Willing, which is led by Alan Mikkelsen of the Department of the Interior, has carried the original conversation about restoration, water supply, and farm sustainability to its present state.

Respect and utilize traditional and local knowledge

Whether land is being restored for future generations, or there is a need to look into the past to see how landscapes once were and have changed over time, traditional and local knowledge is an invaluable resource for conservation initiatives. Tribes have a unique long-term perspective on their landscapes, as they have experienced these changes over time. TEK can serve as a foundation for new land management or restoration practices, bringing historically proven techniques into conservation practitioners’ toolkits. Tribes in the Klamath Basin have also shown that modern scientific monitoring can and should play a role in land management decisions that lie within their ancestral territories. Their unique interest in the Basin’s health lends itself to the quality and quantity of monitoring data that is available for consideration now and in the future.

> Whether land is being restored for future generations or there is a need to look into the past to see how landscapes once were and have changed over time, traditional and local knowledge is an invaluable resource for conservation initiatives.

Acknowledge Tribal sovereignty

Another tool that has been useful throughout the negotiation, permitting, and evaluation processes is the Tribal right to government-to-government consultation. As federally recognized entities, Tribes can put pressure on federal and state governments where non-profit organizations cannot. According to Dave Meurer, this has been particularly helpful throughout the dam delicensing process; Tribes’ access to FERC is powerful and unique relative to non-profits and other organizations interested in the delicensing process. Treaty rights and other federal obligations to the Tribes have been used to reinforce these initiatives. Senior water rights and Endangered Species Act listings are also existing tools that have been leveraged throughout this process.

Tell your shared story, through the right storytellers

While the dam delicensing process on the Klamath River has a diverse set of stakeholders, it is the Tribes of the Klamath Basin that lie at the heart of this movement. The dam delicensing process is really a story of Indigenous people protecting and reconnecting with the source of their cultural heritage: the Klamath River. It is stories like these, narratives told by their true storytellers, that have the potential to impact significant change. Mark Bransom, CEO of KRRC, describes the Corporation’s role in the dam removal process in conjunction with the Tribal input as follows:

> “We are here to do the leg work. Part of storytelling is finding credible people to tell the story. For the dam removal project, it’s the Tribes, conservation groups, and fishing organizations that have the platform and credibility to tell this story. It is the passion that they bring and the reflection that it is an environmental project in addition to being a social justice initiative. They get to talk about how their lives will change with dam removal. They have been the most affected. It's their story.”

Storytelling is persuasive and critical—and the Klamath River Restoration project has extraordinary stories to tell, from the importance of salmon to the health of the river, its flows, and the life of the Tribe to regained Tribal rights and sovereignty, to the lengthy legal and political battles and overall perseverance that have pushed the movement to the brink of success.

In closing

The Klamath River restoration effort illustrates how mainstream conservation organizations can support Native American communities in their efforts to reconnect with their cultural heritage. The Klamath River represents a story of remarkable perseverance on the part of the Yurok, Karuk, Hoopa Valley, and Klamath Tribes, as well as a story of increasing stakeholder partnership across this important landscape. And, it showcases the benefits that accrue to all parties when Tribal voices, values, and sovereign rights are respected, defended, and restored. While there is still much work to do before the four dams on the Klamath River are removed, the lessons from this initiative can inform and catalyze similar efforts across North America.

Pembroke Township is part of the greater Kankakee ecosystem, often described as the "Everglades of the North," rich in biodiversity and home to the largest intact black oak savanna in the world. Photo by Carl Strang.

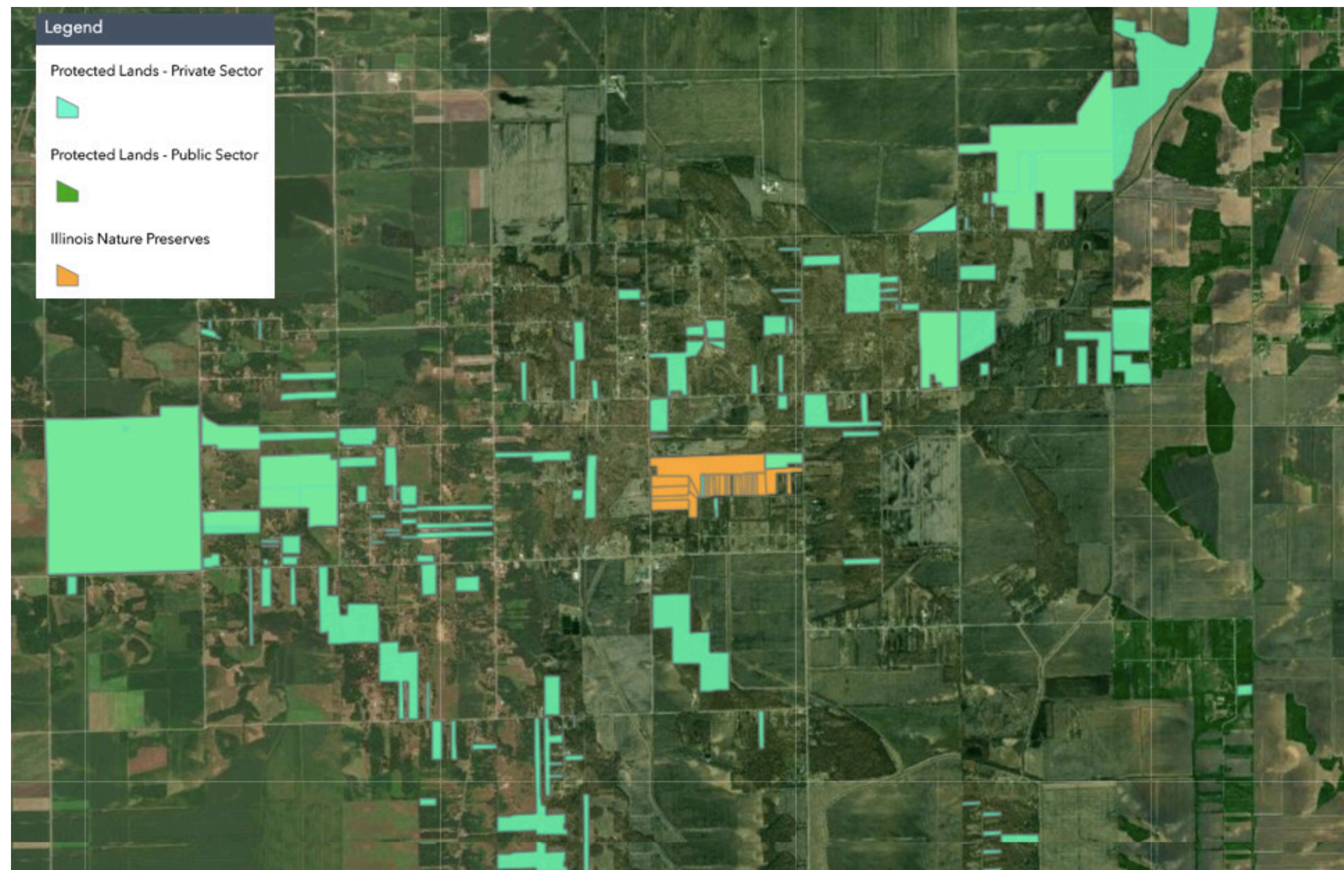
PEMBROKE TOWNSHIP

HOW COMMUNITY TRUST HAS CATALYZED CONSERVATION OF THE KANKAKEE SANDS AND ITS BLACK OAK SAVANNA

Background

Pembroke Township of northeastern Illinois, an hour south of Chicago, is part of a unique large-scale ecosystem that has endured many changes and transformations throughout a rich and varied history. Dubbed the "Everglades of the North," the greater Kankakee ecosystem is the ancestral homeland of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, Myaamia, Bodéwadmiakiwen (Potawatomi), Kaskaskia, Peoria, and Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo) Peoples and was once an oasis teeming with an abundance of biodiversity, including bison, passenger pigeons, and an unmatched density of waterfowl. As European pioneers and trappers continued their westward exploration of North America, the greater Kankakee ecosystem became a critical pitstop for many, and a permanent home for some. Displacement of Native American populations, including the Potawatomi tribe, and significant land transformation ensued. The dredging of the Kankakee River, draining of its wetlands, and logging of its forests have left just a fraction of the region's original biodiversity and biomass. The entire ecosystem did not share this fate, however.

The Kankakee Sands, located in Pembroke Township in the southern reaches of the greater ecosystem, did not experience the same alterations caused by the European settlers' plow, like much of the rest of the state, nor were there any wetlands to drain. This sandy soil is the result of receding glaciers and the subsequent glacial flows that



Map courtesy of I-View, Prairie State Conservation Coalition.

deposited fine sediments in their wake. This seemingly desolate region was left untouched and was eventually sold to emancipated enslaved persons after the Civil War (who in turn used it to create a major stop along the Underground Railroad). This effort was led by Joseph "Pap" Tetter, a former enslaved person himself. In addition to founding Hopkins Park, Tetter led the effort in providing other formerly enslaved people opportunities for a new life. Along with an exodus from the south following the Civil War (the Great Migration), African Americans also found their way to Pembroke-Hopkins Park (PHP) as an outlet from the Great Depression and its impacts on Chicago's economy. Pembroke-Hopkins Park, a peaceful area, resembled life in the southern farmlands that held a sense of familiarity. In spite of the poor quality of the soil, the Pembroke area has continued to support farming by a proud, historically African American community until the present day, though poverty caused by systematic inequality persists.

And, while the land in Pembroke was not as fertile as the rest of the state for agricultural purposes, it was rich in biodiversity and an increasingly scarce landscape: black oak savannah, making it attractive as a target for protection by conservation groups in recent years. Black oak savannah are characterized by open canopy forest with sandy prairie below and are naturally managed through controlled burning. Hopkins Park, the most populous town within the township, is the epicenter of the world's largest remaining and intact black oak savanna. Through natural and prescribed burn management, these sandy plains and dunes are scattered with mature black oak trees with an open and spacious grasslands below. As the historical stewards of this unique and rare landscape, the Hopkins Park community takes pride in the value of their natural capital. As such, they have and will continue to have a major vested interest when it comes to the conservation future of this natural and cultural treasure.

Initiatives to date

The Hopkins Park community has always known that their land is special. It was only a couple of decades ago that other conservationists came to that same realization: a recognition that this land is ecologically unique and valuable. Up to the point of that realization, the African American community in Hopkins Park had sustainably stewarded the landscape in which they resided.

The Field Museum's Quality of Life planning sessions were held from March to June 2016 and involved more than 100 PHP residents and stakeholders. Photo courtesy of The Field Museum.

Conservation interest starting in in the 1990s was characterized by a top-down approach to preserving this unique landscape that did not account for the longstanding local stewardship or value sustaining the human as well as the natural communities. By 2016, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) had undertaken a 2,300-acre buying spree that local organizations and communities could not match. Many local leaders thought these land purchases took advantage of the economically challenged population and threatened the integrity and future of the community. Points of contention from the community's perspective included land purchased along water and sewer lines that impacted residents' ability to link into these systems; reduced tax income due to TNC's non-profit status; and TNC's ability to outbid residents on land at auction. Mark Hodge, mayor of the village of Hopkins Park, wrote at that time about the "community genocide of the village of Hopkins Park and Pembroke Township by conservancy groups."[1] Fortunately, since that time, stakeholder groups have increasingly come together to build trust, connect on common ground, and identify how to move forward more effectively together.

One major positive development was involvement by the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. In 2016, using methods developed by Field Museum anthropologists to advance community buy-in for natural resources conservation abroad, the Field Museum (TFM) conducted a series of stakeholder interviews. The interviews indicated the need for a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the relationship between the community and its natural resources. This development led to their conducting of a Quality of Life Process Report in PHP to establish land-use planning recommendations. This process mirrored TFM's methodology for similar community reports in Amazonian communities in South America. The purpose of the process was to identify and prioritize community sentiments and attitudes towards land-use alternatives and practices for the future. Because "the natural environment depends on people for its continued health, just as people depend on healthy nature for their quality of life," engagement and collaboration with the PHP community was essential to the process of identifying priorities and developing plans

for a more sustainable future.[2] The community involvement approach reflected TFM's view that interdependencies exist between land and people. The connection between the land and people has always been central to global health and balance, but it is a principle that was long ignored by the mainstream conservation community, which is now re-learning this central principle from traditional and Indigenous populations in the country and across the globe.

The TFM Quality of Life Process Report in PHP found that residents ranked natural resource protection as a high priority alongside a desire for economic development. The Museum team also found in residents' responses a distrust of conservation organizations. These potentially contradicting stances reflect the complex nature of community-based conservation initiatives, and the need to shift from top-down approaches to more inclusive and effective collaborative efforts. Indeed, this fundamental shift in the conservation movement is occurring across the continent and beyond, as people work more in community-grounded landscape conservation partnerships, typically focused on conservation and cultural and community health, and involving a number of cross-sector organizational, individual, and institutional partners/stakeholders.

TFM reported on community members' desire to value their natural resources, collaborate with well-intentioned experts, and be a part of the decision-making process. Stated goals included:

1. "Make Pembroke enviable."
2. The Nature Conservancy, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and other outside stakeholders must adopt and sustain practices of being "good neighbors" in Pembroke.
3. Residents must become more organized and involved in decisions affecting their land and lives.

Another strategy that has helped address inequalities between the Pembroke community and outside non-profit organizations and entities is the establishment of a community non-profit. Established in 1995, the Community Development Corporation (CDC) is an organization formed by and for the community members of Hopkins Park. The CDC's mission is to serve as a unified voice of the community when working towards a variety of goals with several organizations and businesses. The organization places a high value on the natural resources within PHP and on the sustainability of cultural heritage. The CDC represents the community's interests when engaging with conservation organizations such as TNC and USFWS. In the 1990s and early 2000s, land acquisition by conservation organizations was executed without public input. While the goal of these conservation organizations and the communities often overlapped, the lack of communication, cooperation, and input led to a sense of distrust from the community's perspective.

As a representative group in the community, the CDC has served as a point of contact for conservation organizations, in addition to exploring opportunities to promote conservation with the community's best interest in mind. The CDC believes that conservation is about people and that a relationship with the land cannot exist without people, too. The incorporation of the community's perspectives, ideas, values, and beliefs has become a central value for conservation in PHP because of the CDC's leadership. Thanks to the work of the CDC, and the Field Museum's involvement, the Pembroke community felt that they had been listened to for the first time, resulting in meaningful progress towards conservation with community members adequately represented and included.

The Nature Conservancy's top-down land acquisition strategy has evolved in recent years as a result of these advances. A dialogue with community members facilitated by the Museum began in 2016, resulting in TNC placing a moratorium on land acquisition in order to give time and space to work

Sustainability planning sessions with PHP community members and conservation stakeholders. Photo by Erika Hasle, courtesy of the Field Museum.

with the community on a collaborative sustainability plan moving forward. Other efforts to work with the community have built trust as well. TNC recently agreed to return a piece of property back to the community that served as a cemetery in the past. The land donation will incorporate conservation improvements such as the planting of native plants to promote pollinator activity, in addition to community amenities such as commemorative walkways and benches. This type of approach is a blueprint for TNC and other conservation organizations working with the community in Pembroke-Hopkins Park and other communities moving forward as the top-down conservation approach is replaced by community-grounded and inclusive conservation principles.

There have been other outside conservation efforts as well, which have also needed and undergone re-calibration. Most notably, over the past few decades, there have been various efforts by the USFWS in conjunction with other parties, such as the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC), to establish protected areas in Pembroke Township and beyond. Due to the ecological value and fragmented nature of the landscape, this work has been part of a larger initiative to connect a series of protected areas known as the Kankakee Nature Preserve. These protections include private and public land and hold some of the strongest protection measures available to land conservation initiatives.

Efforts to preserve this fragmented landscape have faced pushback in the past from conflicting opinions within the community. Differing opinions around the types of land use, values associated with the land, and control over land use and ownership decisions have been at the heart of the community's concerns. Like the efforts of TNC, protected areas can be perceived as detrimental

to economic growth. As the report from TFM suggests, the PHP community does value natural resources and the role they play in culture. Aligning community concern with efforts for landscape-scale conservation may benefit many stakeholders if approached with care. One such example is the Partners for Wildlife Program in PHP with the USFWS, whereby collaborating with PHP landowners within an identified Approved Acquisition Area for conservation has the potential to enhance landscape connectivity without the purchase or acquisition of private lands, through mutually agreed upon management strategies. In the Partners for Wildlife Program, willing landowners can leverage USFWS services and resources to the benefit of the ecological health of their property. This aligns the values the community places on natural resources with the benefits of landscape connectivity. In complex conservation areas such as PHP, as well as many others in the United States, it is increasingly essential to have a diverse toolkit for conservation practices. Not all tools may be used, but as PHP shows, there are often no "one size fits all" solutions when community partnerships are central to success.

Equity principles in action

Respect for the community's unique history and culture has been instrumental in advancing conservation strategies that are both effective and just in the Pembroke-Hopkins Park community. Outside conservation efforts that began decades ago reflected a top-down approach focused on ecological opportunities that were often insensitive or harmful to community needs and sustainability. This approach eroded the trust of the community and ignored or undermined important local conservation and community values. More recently, the inclusion of diverse perspectives has led to a stronger foundation of trust and mutually acceptable strategies for conservation. The report from TFM marked the first time that community members felt like their voices were being heard.

In the last five years, these efforts have facilitated more inclusive acquisition and management strategies for protecting this unique ecological and cultural landscape. There are now ongoing conservation projects that specifically include diverse perspectives from the community that will be memorialized in CDC's community sustainability plan. For example, the plan includes strategies for how landowners can improve land stewardship practices with conservation in mind, which are complementary to the USFWS Partners Program. The combination of these two programs is a progression of stewardship through the cooperation of community landowners, the community's unified voice and vision, and federal programing. By focusing on ecological values in conjunction with the rich culture and history of PHP, conservation efforts have been accepted and embraced more widely. This shift in the focus of conservation efforts has also led to more resilient and lasting results. Efforts to incorporate community voices in various projects and initiatives have required that listening be a major part of engagement strategies with the PHP community; cracks in foundational trust can easily form when a group is being ignored or minimized. TFM's report marked a significant opportunity for the community to both speak and be heard with regard to conservation planning. It took more than TFM going into the community and talking to folks to build that trust though: it also required that the community have a united voice to facilitate these conversations. CDC has played this key role. As stewards of the land for over a century, the PHP community is a part of the land, its culture, and its heritage. The incorporation of the community's voices and perspectives is not only critical to the success of conservation efforts, but also in upholding diverse, equitable, and inclusive values.

Lesson learned

While PHP is situated in a unique landscape, the challenges that it faces are not isolated to this geography. Fragmented landscapes, a rich cultural heritage, and a history of community conflict over

past conservation initiatives are common threads that many practitioners experience in their work. Through comprehensive stakeholder engagement, a series of tools and best practices have been identified in PHP that may benefit work in other communities.

> Respect for the community's unique history and culture has been instrumental in advancing conservation strategies that are both effective and just.

An African American family's homestead in Hopkins Park. Photo by Joe Tighe, courtesy of the Field Museum.

Create a platform for trust and communication

The PHP community spent decades without formal or consistent opportunities for input in the conservation of their lands. It is essential that platforms for communication are established so that an open and honest dialogue can inform conservation initiatives. This platform in PHP was established through a collaborative process guided by TFM. Jacob Campbell, an environmental anthropologist at the Museum, notes that his team "played a role as a convener in ways that led towards new kinds of surprising connections and mechanisms for exchange, including being able to identify common ground across a variety of different stakeholders." By setting the table for discussion as a neutral convener, TFM worked with community members and conservation organizations to create an opportunity for each to voice their respective values. This process of dialogue was formalized through the Quality of Life Report methodology. The result of these discussions was a greater understanding of the values of the stakeholders sitting across the table and an opportunity to establish conditions for what it means to be a 'good neighbor' in PHP. Conservation entities now look to these conclusions in guiding decisions. Incorporating the community's voice in conservation planning has led to a more resilient path forward in connecting and preserving a unique landscape while also promoting community health and well-being.

Engage landowners

Landscape connectivity becomes more complicated as property boundaries increase in number through many small land holdings, and this is the case in most areas of the country east of the Mississippi River. In PHP, half-acre plots that share borders with larger protected units have the potential to enhance biodiversity and ecological resiliency, and landowners are often aware of the natural health of their small landscapes. To protect broader landscape values, conservation practitioners must become more flexible in their approach to connecting these landscapes. Todd Boonstra of USFWS and Kim Roman of INPC have both identified an individually tailored approach as key to their work with private landowners. For Roman, the goal is, "to meet that landowner

Hopkins Park youth participate in restoration activities at the Kankakee Sands. Photo by Robert Themer, courtesy of The Daily Journal.

wherever they are, whether they like to hunt, or they like to garden, or they appreciate the rural character of the area. I try to build some common ground that way." Both Roman and Boonstra have found success working with landowners by establishing relationships. Just showing up and being there for the community is a key first step in building trust. "When you drive up and they (landowners) wave 'hi' and know you by name, that's when you're building relationships," Roman adds. These relationships that are built over time have proven to be the most successful in terms of achieving conservation targets on private land. Stronger relationships with landowners build resiliency into conservation initiatives, as it is private land in the Midwestern and Eastern United States that connects the larger landscapes and plays an important role in conserving community vitality and cultural heritage in a more holistic way.

Incorporate younger generations

As is common throughout many rural areas, the Pembroke community is experiencing an exodus to larger cities by their youth. Due to a perception by young people that there is no opportunity or value in their community, many have moved away from PHP in recent decades. TFM's report echoes this sentiment by showing that there is a strong priority associated with engaging the younger generation in the PHP community. Groups like the CDC, USFWS, and INPC have in recent years teamed up to lead engagement in conservation through the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). In this way, conservation groups and community members have found that they can rally around the younger generation in pursuit of their goals and values.

For conservation practitioners, inspiring the next generation of conservationists in a rare and unique landscape is key to long-term success. Johari Cole, president of the CDC, says that this is an opportunity to address the transfer of land that has been historically contentious because "many of the old generation who first migrated to this area were losing their farms because the kids no longer wanted to be here." Increased interest in conservation from younger generations could, many hope, lead to less land turnover because they would then be more inclined to steward their land and preserve their cultural heritage. Roman is pleasantly surprised that she works with the youth programs more in PHP than the other eight counties in Illinois that she covers for the INPC. Engaging the youth via the YCC also addresses the economic health of the community, giving jobs to young adults where there is otherwise no opportunity.

In closing

Conservation initiatives in PHP are representative of many efforts across the country where small private land holdings are common. An intact landscape is difficult to achieve in an area that is fragmented by small, private parcels of land. This ownership pattern increases the difficulty of successfully implementing programs due to the sheer number of landowners (private, public, and non-profit, such as TNC) and the different land management practices that come along with those landowners. Collaboration across the landscape is key. The work in PHP has shown that the community must be sufficiently heard, included, and engaged in collective decision-making in order to successfully achieve conservation goals and community-grounded and -supported conservation at the landscape scale.

Masonville Cove is the nation's first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership and comprises 70 acres of water and 54 acres of restored wetlands, nature trails, and a protected bird sanctuary in the heart of Baltimore. Photo courtesy of the Chesapeake Bay Program, chesapeakebay.net.

BALTIMORE WILDERNESS

HOW A CITY WITH A RICH HISTORY OF COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION IS STEPPING UP ITS GAME

Background

Baltimore, Maryland, was built at the head of the Patapsco River. The river flows directly into the Chesapeake Bay, the name of which is thought to come from the Algonquian word "Chesapoic," used by the Paskestikweya People and other Algonquian-speaking Peoples whose ancestral homelands stretch throughout what is presently known as Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia.[1] Today, Baltimore is one of the nation's leaders in urban ecology. This racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse city is majority Black (62.6% of the population) and is a place of notable conservation firsts.[2] In 1998, following several years of meaningful work by the city to incorporate ecological thinking into parks management,[3] the National Science Foundation funded the nation's first Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) program in the city, the Baltimore Ecosystem Study (BES). The BES was led by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Northern Research Station scientists, who sought to understand the ways in which the Baltimore Metropolitan Area functioned as an ecosystem. This regional effort was the springboard for the now-thriving field of urban ecology and also the hugely influential, current 28-site LTER Program in the U.S. and Antarctica. BES has led to a number of breakthroughs that have greatly increased our understanding of urban watershed and river corridor hydrology and how cities function as social-ecological systems whose human and

The Port of Baltimore, situated along the tidal basins of the three branches of the Patapsco River, is one of the largest port facilities in the U.S. Photo courtesy of Security Magazine.

natural components interact to create unique effects not found in wild or rural areas. The study also laid the foundation for what is now a rich history of community-based environmental work in Baltimore, characterized by active engagement with and buy-in from the city's diverse communities. This work has faced many challenges, but currently looks bright as the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition builds momentum for equity-focused conservation goals and the USFS Northern Research Station continues its important work.

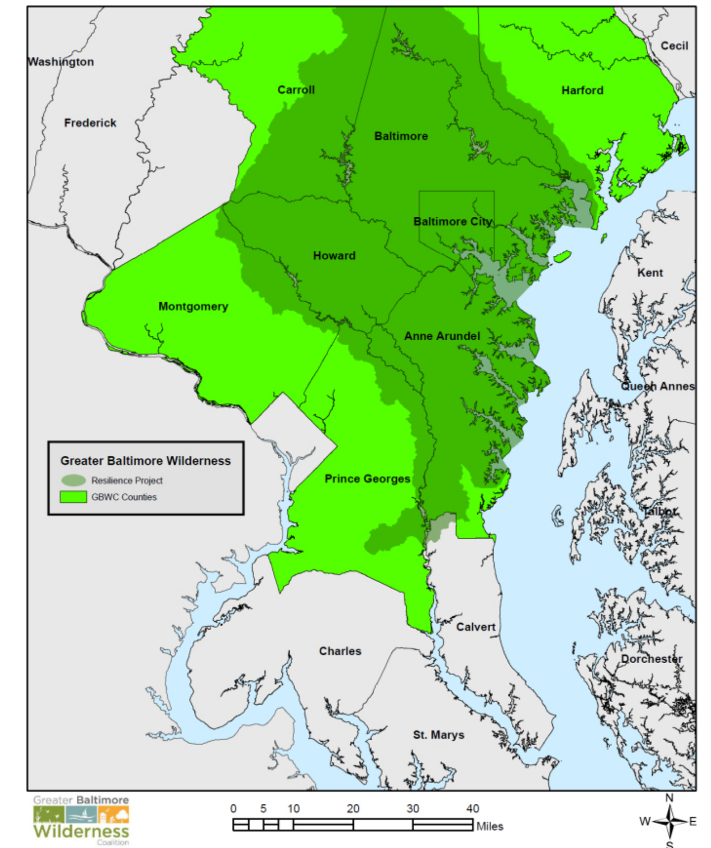
Initiatives to date

Masonville Cove

In 2013, building on a tradition of science-based conservation in the area, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated Masonville Cove as the first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership in the country. Urban Wildlife Refuges operate under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Urban Wildlife Conservation Program and seek to create community-based fish and wildlife conservation efforts that remove barriers to green and blue spaces in and around cities. Masonville Cove comprises 70 acres of water and 54 acres of restored wetlands, nature trails, and a protected bird sanctuary in the heart of Baltimore; the site is home to more than 230 bird species, including a nesting pair of bald eagles. But this landscape was not always a haven for wildlife—or people. The Cove and the surrounding urban areas have a long and complex history beginning in the late 1800s with the creation of the small village of Masonville. In the early 1900s, a new rail line was built in the area. The line ran through Masonville, connecting the Cove to the nearby communities of Brooklyn and Curtis Bay. As a result, industry in the area prospered and grew. However, as industrial areas expanded, people in the Masonville community were pushed out and moved to other residential areas in Baltimore. By

the middle of the 20th century, Masonville had become entirely industrialized.

Masonville Cove is located on the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River, which became increasingly polluted from open sewers, fertilizers, and detergents leading to algal blooms that stifled life within the river and the bay. As industry in the Masonville area declined, abandoned lots became dumping grounds littered with debris. These derelict lots and the construction of Interstate 895 left nearby neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Curtis Bay cut off from the Cove. Today, these communities are part of what is known as the Greater Baybrook Peninsula, a racially and ethnically diverse area whose Latinx and Black populations nearly doubled in the period between 2000 and 2016—a trend that is expected to continue.[4]



Map of the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition's project area.

Work to clean up Masonville Cove began in 2007, led by the Maryland Department of Transportation Port Administration (MPA) as part of a compensatory mitigation project connected to the construction of a dredged-material containment facility (DMCF). The facility was needed to contain sediment dredged from the Port of Baltimore's shipping channel system, which is a pillar of the area's economy. The Maryland Port Administration engaged stakeholder groups to create a new plan for the area, including residents from the Curtis Bay and Brooklyn neighborhoods. Precedent for this type of intentional community engagement was well-established in Baltimore, and when residents expressed a desire for a natural area where they could fish and recreate, as opposed to a pristine city park or a developed recreation center, the Maryland Port Administration listened. An urban wildlife refuge was the result.

Following the revitalization of the Cove, however, ongoing community engagement work by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Aquarium, and others revealed that a lack of access to public transportation, as well as the surrounding industrial area, created barriers to walking and biking to this and other nearby green and blue spaces. The refuge itself had been shaped by community interests and priorities, but the scope of the mitigation project did not include transportation solutions to better connect Masonville Cove with surrounding communities. As Genevieve LaRouche, a Project Leader at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office puts it, "although it's this really beautiful area, and people can now go and fish there for free, it's really hard to get to because you're in the middle of an industrial area. There are these big railroad tracks that cut it off from the community so you can't walk there. And if you ride your bike…picture taking your life into your own hands riding…a mile to get to Masonville Cove as trucks speed by." While the clean-up of the Cove and its subsequent designation as an Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership was a start, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chesapeake Bay Field Office and many of its partners realized that

more needed to be done to provide equitable access by meaningfully connecting the surrounding communities to nature.

Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition (GBWC)
In 2013, around the same time the refuge was designated, Baltimore-area environmental organizations representing local, state, and federal interests came together to discuss the need to conserve critical landscapes in Baltimore and central Maryland that were expected to experience a significant increase in development and population in the coming decades. One of these groups was the National Aquarium, a fixture in the Inner Harbor area of Baltimore. The National Aquarium is a member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and a partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Masonville Cove. It boasts a 35-plus-year history of local, regional, and global conservation initiatives that provide solutions for protecting aquatic and marine life alongside human communities with goals to combat climate change, save wildlife and habitats, and stop plastic pollution.

At this time, according to Curtis Bennett, the current Director of Equity and Community Engagement at the National Aquarium, the Aquarium and the other Masonville Cove partners reevaluated their outreach and engagement strategies to ensure that the Masonville partnership was engaging people in their own communities in addition to on-site at the Cove. Bennett notes that this included intentionally and thoughtfully co-developing programs, projects, and initiatives with community partners to best meet the needs and interests of community residents and stakeholders.

In 2015, this initial group officially formed the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition (GBWC), a voluntary alliance of local, state, and federal government agencies, private partners, and non-profit organizations that acts as a catalyst for environmental restoration projects in the greater Baltimore area. The Coalition approaches projects through the GBWC's five outcome-focused objectives: Resilience, Equity, Biodiversity, Health, and Discovery.

The GBWC is a landscape conservation network, not a non-profit, per the escalating trend in conservation at the necessary scale. As Erik Meyers, one of the founders and first co-chairs of the coalition, and Vice President of Climate and Water Sustainability at The Conservation Fund, puts it: "I don't know how much you know about organizations in the Chesapeake Bay Area, but there are a lot of [them]," speaking to the long history of public agencies and grassroots organizations working on conservation and environmental stewardship efforts in the area. The founding members of the Coalition decided they would get more NGOs and governmental partners to become members if they focused on building a value-added network that would lead to "deep, true, lasting conservation." This could only be done successfully if they were working at the landscape scale and were able to engage a wide range of partners concerned with both the natural and social aspects of conservation.

They were also intentional in choosing a name for the group, which was modeled after Chicago Wilderness, a long-standing alliance of conservation, health, business, and science partners also working at the confluence of conservation and community well-being in a major city. "We used the name on purpose to get people to ask the question: 'Baltimore? Wilderness? What are you talking about?'" says Meyers. "It was, in part, chosen to emphasize the wild aspects of the landscape that persist despite the dominance of human features on the landscape, and to get people to think more about how that natural network makes up the area that they inhabit. It's so easy to lose contact with our natural foundation."

GBWC STEERING COMMITTEE ORGANIZATIONS	GBWC MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS
• American Planning Association • Blue Water Baltimore • The Center for Chesapeake Communities • Chesapeake Bay Foundation • Chesapeake Conservancy • Howard County, MD • The Conservation Fund • Maryland Department of Natural Resources • Maryland Port Administration • National Aquarium • National Wildlife Federation • University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office • USGS MD-DE-DC Water Science Center	• American Forests • Annapolis, MD • Baltimore City (various agencies) • Baltimore Green Space • Baltimore Tree Trust • City of Bowie, MD • Civic Works • Friends of the Jones Falls • Greater Baybrook Alliance • Gunpowder Valley Conservancy • Harford County, MD • Hispanic Access Foundation • Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake • Irvine Nature Center • Maryland Sea Grant Extension • National Park Service, Chesapeake Bay Office and Captain John Smith NH Trail • Neighborhood Design Center • Neighborspace of Baltimore County • Parks and People Foundation • Pearlstone Center • Rails-to-Trails Conservancy • South Baltimore Gateway Partnership • Tree Baltimore • Urban Sustainability Directors Network • USGS Northeast Regional • USACE Baltimore District • USFWS Patuxent Research Refuge

Today, the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition acts as a convener, communicator, and facilitator focused on leveraging the diverse skillsets and unique strengths of member organizations to achieve its mission of "improving the quality of life in the Greater Baltimore area by identifying, restoring, enhancing, and protecting an interconnected network of lands and waters supporting healthy ecosystems and communities to benefit the people and wildlife of central Maryland." The Coalition has been led by pairs of co-chairs, one from a government agency and one from a non-governmental organization, to emphasize the Coalition's rootedness in public-private collaboration. Its work is guided by a steering committee, again representing both government and NGOs, and projects are coordinated by a paid staff member or by small teams of member agencies and organizations.

In order to ensure a meaningful community-based approach, the Coalition's member organizations represent a spectrum of stakeholders and a diverse group of community leaders. GBWC intentionally fosters partnerships within the Coalition that work together to foster bottom-up solutions that not only connect under-resourced communities of the Greater Baybrook Area to nature, but that are first and foremost focused on trust-building and empowerment. The group has resisted top-down

Curtis Bennett of the National Aquarium participating in a Community Open House event. Photo courtesy of Maryland Department of Transportation, Port Administration.

approaches that focus on meeting, for instance, funding or institutional metrics; they have instead built relationships with community members and have supported the creation and "standing up" (as Meyers says) of organizations embedded within these communities so conservation initiatives are more sustainable and cooperative over time, both in terms of resources and community buy-in.

Reducing barriers

Making Masonville Cove more accessible for neighboring Black and Latinx communities has required a number of short- and long-term efforts. Baltimore has significant wealth gaps between racial groups, with the median household income for African-Americans ($33,801) trailing white households ($62,751) and one third of households of color in Baltimore holding zero net worth.[5] Combined with a history of transportation-related racial segregation in the city, improving access to Masonville Cove was essential to address resource biases.[6]

With these challenges in mind, partners working in the Cove provided (and continue to provide) opportunities for residents to meaningfully engage in planning and conservation efforts for Masonville. South Baltimore residents provide guidance by participating in groups like the Masonville Citizens Advisory Committee. Residents can also learn more about nature through several conservation projects, camps, and field trips. Bennett and other educators working at the Cove also use educational programs to engage visitors, especially youth, in conversations about environmental justice. Speaking at the recent Mid-Atlantic Climate Change Education Conference, Bennett noted that:

> "[E]ducation is a core component of environmental justice. As a collective, we need to educate present and future generations on social and environmental issues using our experiences and diverse cultural perspectives as tools for connection and understanding. To be successful in this effort, we must prioritize listening and learning within our communities to better understand the focal environmental justice issues."[7]

Mobilizing some of these efforts has required organizations like the GBWC and its members to get creative in looking for funding sources. Masonville Cove's designation as an Urban Wildlife Refuge has allowed the Maryland Port Administration and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to leverage funding opportunities more typically applied to traditional natural landscapes or highway improvement projects to benefit this densely populated area and urban refuge.

The agencies applied, for example, for a U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Federal Lands Access Program grant. This grant funded a preliminary feasibility study for a bike path that would link the Curtis Bay and Brooklyn neighborhoods to Masonville Cove, as well as to a larger network of bike paths that connect to the Annapolis area. Once complete, the trail will provide residents with access to a number of area green and blue spaces, as well as job centers. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chesapeake Bay Field Office and Maryland Port Administration also recently applied for additional funding to complete a more detailed feasibility study, bringing the project closer to realization. LaRouche notes that once the multi-modal path is completed, it could further open up the area to other federal lands grant opportunities. The goal is to eventually connect these South Baltimore communities to Patapsco State Park outside of Baltimore City. LaRouche says conservation organizations can use non-traditional funding sources such as these when addressing barriers in accessing green and blue spaces.

Looking beyond Masonville Cove, the GBWC's first major project in the Greater Baltimore landscape also reflects the coalition's reenergized approach to equity and inclusion. In 2015-2016, a Coastal Resilience Project (CRP) funded by a Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation was led in the name of GBWC by The Conservation Fund and American Planning Association, which also engaged the Chesapeake Conservancy, Chesapeake Center for Communities, and U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Maryland-Delaware-D.C. Water Science Center in the work. The project goal was to identify natural and nature-based green infrastructure, such as floodplains, intact forests, parks and greenways, that could and should be managed to buffer communities and critical built infrastructure such as roads and hospitals from adverse climate impacts. Focused on the region's principal watersheds—the Patapsco, Patuxent, and Gunpowder—the project team pulled together existing data sets, such as MD Greenprint, the USGS river gauging system, and individual county and city plans, to generate an interactive map of green infrastructure of all types and scales as a more functional regional resource. Another project goal was to build up the role of the GBWC as an ongoing regional collaborative network to advocate for implementation protection, maintenance, and enhancement of the region's green infrastructure network.

In keeping with its commitment to equity, GBWC member organizations use these tools to identify areas where green infrastructure has the greatest potential to improve quality of life and, especially, mitigate climate change impacts in under-resourced communities. Erik Meyers says that while the Coalition's focus on equity was important from the start, it has occupied an ever-larger role. "We wanted to make sure that we were responding to opportunities to emphasize [green infrastructure] benefits to [historically disenfranchised] communities. And that became somewhat of a pattern for the Coalition, to focus on opportunities to create greater equity, deliver more environmental justice, and focus on what had been the patterns that were keeping people from having a high quality of life in their neighborhoods."

An additional approach the Coalition is taking to address physical and programmatic barriers in the South Baltimore area, and to expand the impact area of the Masonville Cove Environmental Education

Center, is offering resources that allow community members to continue exploring nature in their neighborhoods and on their own time. The National Aquarium, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Living Classrooms Foundation are piloting a Biodiversity Backpacks Program at three locations in the Baltimore area. The backpacks can be checked out to community members who may not be able to attend formal programs at Masonville Cove. Curtis Bennett says this is another program that allows the Coalition to "meet people where they are" and increase equitable access to nature: "People can rent that backpack, and it contains magnifying glasses, binoculars, and field guides that ensure that, even after an official program has occurred, people still have access to resources that they need to engage in nature." The Coalition sees this as a way to foster discovery and increase equitable access to nature across the Greater Baltimore area when formal programs may be inaccessible to community members.

At the National Aquarium, when Bennett started as a Project Manager, one of his first big projects was to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other stakeholders on improved programming (including the Biodiversity Backpacks Program) and conservation initiatives at Masonville Cove. Bennett notes that as the work at Masonville evolved, so did the need for more in-depth community engagement. From 2012 through 2014, as part of a collaborative effort involving community residents, the Baltimore City Office of Sustainability, Department of Public Works and several other stakeholders, the National Aquarium developed a Small Watershed Action Plan (SWAP) for the area, which identified and ultimately prioritized several environmental and sustainability focused goals for the surrounding communities. One of Bennett's roles was to attend community meetings and to meet with community stakeholders to ensure that their goals aligned with the plan. This work led to a growing recognition within the National Aquarium that community engagement outside of the organization's physical location was critical to reaching a more diverse audience.

As part of its strategy to increase community engagement in South Baltimore, the National Aquarium applied for and received a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration NOAA Marine Debris Prevention through Education and Outreach Grant in 2015 to create a community-based program that would address plastic pollution, a major environmental concern in Baltimore. During the same time period, the Aquarium was awarded a grant from the Ocean Project that focused on engaging the Latinx community in South Baltimore. While the Aquarium had been engaged with these neighborhoods for some time, it realized it needed to do more to reach this growing demographic.

Bennett and his team worked with what he calls "community pillars" in the Hispanic community to build trust and to gain support for their project while making sure any programs the Aquarium developed were culturally relevant. Bennett describes community pillars as "places or people that community members already trust, and who are a source of comfort, guidance, and leadership within the community."[8] They had a long list of potential pillars and eventually established a close relationship with Templo de Alabanza Y Restauración, a faith-based organization in the area. By taking the time to meet regularly with the pastor and his wife, Bennett's team was able to co-develop programs and events that had a positive impact on the community from both perspectives. Events that came out of this initiative included the installation of a native habitat garden at a local faith-based organization, a Latino Conservation Week event at Masonville Cove, and a community clean-up event that drew more than 100 participants. The Aquarium has continued to build off these efforts, including additional Latino Conservation Week Celebrations—as part of the Hispanic Access Foundation initiative—and community programs and clean-ups. The Aquarium and its partners are

Baltimore teens kayak at Masonville Cove. Photo courtesy of Living Classrooms Foundation.

now collectively working through an Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice Small Grant to strengthen and increase their efforts to further engage the Latinx community in South Baltimore.

Lessons learned

Meeting people where they are

When implementing programs to engage Baltimore's diverse communities in nature discovery, Bennett emphasizes the importance of recognizing that there is no such thing as universal relevancy. Barriers to participation—whether in accessing and using Masonville Cove, participating in the Aquarium's community programming, or checking out a Biodiversity Backpack—are not only physical, but can also be programmatic. While "meeting people where they are" is a common mantra in community engagement work, intentionality is key to successful and meaningful outcomes. As the GBWC partnership grew and built its own capacity to increase its intentionality of engagement efforts, Coalition partners realized that equitable access means something different in every community, and it is important to "listen to understand" when engaging communities. This means taking into account each community's unique historical contexts and challenges.

By working directly with residents and local community organizations to co-develop plans and programs, the GBWC and its partners have begun to create the kind of partnership that creates long-term sustainability of green infrastructure and conservation projects. As part of the mapping and green infrastructure opportunity identification of the Coastal Resilience Project, for example, the Coalition was involved with two community-scale plans led by the American Planning Association's (APA) Community Planning Assistance Team program. In the city, the community-scale plan was proposed by the Chesapeake Center for Youth and Development. The Community Planning Assistance

Deep Blue, a program of Blue Water Baltimore (a GBWC steering committee member), works together with community members to support clean water and strong local initiatives. Photo courtesy of Blue Water Baltimore.

Team plan was centered upon the Brooklyn neighborhood of South Baltimore, specifically the revitalization of a seven-acre existing city-owned park, Garrett Park. The goal was to envision Garrett Park as a centerpiece for community revitalization and to enhance the nearby Middle Branch of the Patapsco River. The Chesapeake Center for Youth Development, a local community organization, took the lead in ensuring community members' involvement in the planning process. The APA Community Planning Assistance Team worked with the Chesapeake Center for Youth Development to interview local stakeholders and community residents, including children, during the planning process. They captured and addressed as many perspectives and concerns as possible. In addition, a number of community charettes were held with residents to talk about the community's educational needs and environmental concerns.

As Bennett notes, creating and implementing plans such as the Brooklyn/Baybrook Community Action Plan often takes years to complete. Many non-profits do not have the capacity to see a project through from planning to implementation to long-term maintenance of the space, not to mention also offering programming. Subsequent to the Garrett Park planning exercise in Brooklyn, The Conservation Fund was able to secure major grant funding to launch the implementation of those plans. In this phase, a new community development corporation, the Greater Baybrook Alliance, became a vital local partner in channeling community input. The Fund and Greater Baybrook Alliance engaged GBWC staff in helping to "stand up" a new community-based Friends of Garrett Park group.

Erik Meyers notes that, because the GBWC is looking for more of an equal partnership with community groups, they try to find the right local partners to make projects sustainable and build the capacity of the community to develop new leaders. In some cases, he says, that means nurturing new institutions through their early phases of establishment and growth, especially in under-resourced communities whose existing leaders are stretched thin. Working closely with trusted community organizations through a co-development model has allowed Coalition members to build upon early successes. This approach expands these organizations' capacity to continue offering nature-based programming that is directed by the community's needs rather than providing a one-size-fits-all programming approach. In anticipation of the need to create a stronger foundation of trust with under-resourced Baltimore communities following the Masonville Cove revitalization, the GBWC and its member organizations have also more thoughtfully built activities—such as attending community meetings, festivals, and other non-conservation events—into grants and other funding proposals. Both Bennett and Ashley Traut, GBWC's Senior Advisor and owner of holistic sustainability firm Gaiacene Services LLC, have learned that it is important to attend local meetings to become familiar with a community's unique challenges, learn what residents identify as priority areas, and build transformational relationships with community leaders ahead of implementing conservation-related projects. Taking time to build trust is essential, but this kind of groundwork-laying engagement is often a challenge to communicate as an essential need to funders. When Traut worked with local non-profit Blue Water

Baltimore to establish its Deep Blue program, which addresses stormwater, greening, and public health issues, he convinced funders that part of the success of that program relied upon staff members' attendance at local meetings: "I said, 'I'm going to send this staff member [to this community meeting], and all she's going to do for the first four months is sit and listen.' They gave us the extra funding, and it worked exactly as hoped [in gaining the community's trust and buy-in]."

> Equitable access means something different in every community, and it is important to "listen to understand" when engaging communities. This means taking into account each community's unique historical contexts and challenges.

Meredith Chaiken, Executive Director of the Greater Baybrook Alliance (GBA), says that the Alliance has found that successful trust-building can also be achieved by tapping established institutions that community members already rely upon for services, such as the Enoch Pratt Free Library's Brooklyn Branch that borders Garrett Park. She notes that existing institutional barriers and levels of distrust in Baltimore are high, and the Greater Baybrook community is often apprehensive about new efforts from outside groups. The widely used library has helped the Alliance build out their programming so programs previously offered only at the library, such as the popular Yoga at the Library, are now offered at Garrett Park as well. Chaiken says that they picked up additional days and paid the same yoga instructor to offer classes at the park so existing patrons were comfortable attending. In addition, having outdoor yoga classes at the park attracted new users, and the increased presence made the park space seem more vibrant to passers-by.

The Alliance has also used the library space to administer surveys to residents asking them what activities they would like to see at the newly revitalized park. Chaiken says that the surveys were designed to be highly visual in order to be accessible to people with low levels of literacy or language barriers. The Conservation Fund and GBA collaborated on implementing the Garrett Park Action Plan by directly involving the community; the Fund also invested in incorporating the Friends of Garrett Park as a means of vesting park improvements and stewardship with the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods.

The GBWC and its member organizations have taken additional steps to ensure that community members are able to engage in planning meetings by eliminating barriers to attendance. One way Traut envisions this happening for future projects is by offering complimentary childcare at community meetings to increase residents' capacity to participate. Rewriting technical planning documents in order to distill important aspects of the project so they are more accessible to community members has also proven important. As Traut notes, he commonly works with a cadre of very talented engineers, but the materials produced from those planning meetings are often not written in a way that is engaging for Baltimore residents who attend community meetings. "You've got to have folks that can translate dense material in a way that resonates with that particular audience. And I use the world 'resonate' intentionally. If I can touch a nerve, that's going to go a lot farther [in gaining community members' buy-in]." The Coalition has also increased its efforts to translate materials used for community outreach into languages other than English in order to decrease barriers to inclusion. Baltimore's Latinx population is growing, so the GBWC now creates outreach materials in both English and Spanish.

Prioritizing justice, equity, & inclusion principles at an organizational level
The success of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Innovative Solutions Grant+ project led the Aquarium to promote Bennett as its first Director of Conservation and Community Engagement. Bennett said it was an exciting moment when they were able to point to the creation of a new department within the Aquarium focused solely on community engagement as part of the grant outcomes report. He says it proved that "when you're being authentic and you're being intentional in terms of creating relationships, co-developing [programs with communities], this is the type of change and impact that can happen."

As Bennett's new team continued to deepen its focus on justice, equity, and inclusion through its work in the South Baltimore communities of Curtis Bay and Brooklyn, as well as at the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center, the National Aquarium's leadership again took notice. Bennett says they realized that we can't achieve our vision to change the way humanity cares for our ocean planet without first grounding our work in the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. He reflects that the newly created department is building upon the successes and lessons of the original community engagement team and will use those lessons to lead by example as the organization continues to integrate equity, inclusion, and justice in not only what we do, but how we do it.

Recognize (and embrace) the journey
Successfully and intentionally putting equity, inclusion, and justice into action in Baltimore has been reprioritized by the GBWC and its many members and partners in the years since Masonville Cove was established. However, when talking about their successes, Bennett is quick to note that everyone still has a lot of work to do, and they are just beginning on their equity journey. The Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center celebrated its first 10 years in 2019, and Bennett says that the Cove's Decade of Dedication was a good time for the Masonville Cove partners—and the Coalition—to pause and celebrate successes and think about where they want to go in the future. For instance, as part of the Decade of Dedication, Masonville Cove partners are trying different ways to further increase accessibility by giving residents an opportunity to connect with nature on their own time, such as through the Biodiversity Backpacks program. Bennett says that it is important to remember that coalitions, as well as communities, are dynamic. The Coalition steering committee will be revisiting its membership accord in 2021 to make sure the objectives it outlines are still relevant for the communities within its impact area. They will also be reaching out to Coalition members to create additional shared goals and priorities for the future.

One lesson GBWC co-founder Erik Meyers recently picked up and says he would give to other conservation organizations interested in engaging under-resourced communities is work with those communities to sort their concerns into three "buckets": what are those important areas in which your organization can make an impact; what are the areas over which your organization has an influence, but doesn't control; and what are those concerns that are important but your organization has absolutely no control over. When having discussions with the community, this helps to clarify expectations and points to areas where you may be able to pull in more partners to solve a problem, or help the community connect to much-needed resources. It also speaks to another lesson Meyers has to offer: "You cannot be all things, and you cannot meet all needs, so it has to be done through a partnership. The broader you can make that partnership, and the more expertise and resources you can bring [to a community], the more you will be welcome." He also says that The Conservation Fund has been intentional about increasing the diversity of their staff to be more representative of the areas in which they work.

In closing
The GBWC and its partner organizations in the Baltimore region have come a long way in addressing issues of equity and inclusion over the five years since the Coalition's inception. The partner organizations within the Coalition bring with them a wealth of experience and knowledge around equity and inclusion; however, as Bennett notes, this is an ongoing journey whose work is never done. Organizations can improve the ways in which they engage different communities and increase the inclusivity of their programming by engaging community members from the start as partners in co-developing conservation programming and plans. In addition, these efforts require organizations to engage with DEI principles in an authentic way by committing time and resources to achieving more just and equitable outcomes. The GBWC and its member organizations provide an example of the ways in which organizations can grow their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts over time by critically examining and learning from past efforts, working with organizations already embedded in communities, showing up and meeting communities where they are, and looking for non-traditional funding sources to increase equitable access and other benefits to communities facing marginalization and exclusion.

IN CONCLUSION

WEAVING TOGETHER DIVERSE STRANDS OF CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY TO PROTECT PEOPLE AND NATURE

A central tenet of the landscape conservation movement is, increasingly, the need to move beyond top-down approaches in favor of bringing communities together across boundaries to achieve conservation goals and shape a shared vision for the future.[1] The stories chronicled here illustrate several different ways that the principles of equity, justice, and inclusion can guide landscape conservation efforts, helping collaboratives redefine objectives, re-envision success, and incorporate different perspectives in ways that are authentic, transformative, and enduring.

In the Klamath Basin and the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, we see how the centering of Indigenous priorities and voices catalyzes momentum for protecting treasured landscapes and addressing environmental injustice. In Pembroke-Hopkins Park, we see mainstream conservation organizations adapt the ways in which they engage the local community in order to re-build trust and address resource biases, ensuring local knowledge and people are properly valued and included in co-creating a future for the landscape. The Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition tackles issues of access, inclusion, and stakeholder engagement to co-create programs and achieve outcomes that reduce barriers to accessing and enjoying green (and blue) spaces. These case studies provide real-world examples of how inequality presents itself across various landscapes, and how addressing historical, social, political, and cultural conditions is essential to achieving landscape scale conservation. One

During a Yurok-led TREX training burn, Elizabeth Azzuz blows on an ember of angelica root, which will be used to light the burn near Weitchpec, CA. Photo by Kiliii Yüyan, courtesy of High Country News.

common theme across these stories is how partnerships between local communities—whether Black, Indigenous, or Latinx—and mainstream conservation organizations require reconciling narratives on the environment by addressing injustices, naming inequalities, and finding new ways to work together despite these odds.

Mainstream conservation organizations, and the landscape conservation movement along with them, have a long way to go towards inclusive conservation. As organizations work toward addressing inherent biases, righting historical wrongs, and building truly inclusive and equitable organizations and movements, a plethora of challenges await. Fortunately, conservation is not the only sector undergoing such a transformation; guidance on how best to move forward can be found in research, scholarship, and parallel social, environmental and climate justice movements. To this end, this report also provides a number of resources and readings intended to further explore themes and lessons touched on by the four case studies.

Taken in sum, the lessons and principles illustrated in Baltimore, Bears Ears, Pembroke-Hopkins Park, and the Klamath Basin demonstrate how conservation goals are furthered by the inclusion of people too often ignored by the mainstream conservation movement. In each of these cases, the processes and approached by which community perspectives were incorporated into the vision and goals of the collaborative served as keystones, strengthening the overall partnership and building a more robust and enduring movement to the benefit of both nature and people. By weaving together people from many backgrounds and the diversity of natural systems they depend upon and value, inclusive conservation can create a tapestry through which a network of many people and their local—and culturally unique—participation in conservation ensures the mantle of conserving nature is carried by many people, in many places, for many different reasons, but all with the same effect of preserving natural places and living things for future generations. As landscape conservation connects different habitats for a common goal of sustainable and functional ecosystems, inclusive conservation connects different people and their natural places for a common goal of sustainable and highly functional conservation partnerships and movements.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We understand that this document is by no means a comprehensive report on how to put the principles of equity, justice, and inclusion into action with regards to landscape conservation efforts. In order to further support readers' education and journey, we recommend the following texts as supplementary reading.

Essential readings: Understanding relationships with nature and the environmental movement

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Gilio-Whitaker, D. (2019). *As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, From Colonization to Standing Rock* (1st ed.). Beacon Press.

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Kimmerer, R. (2013). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.

Critical evaluations and organizational development

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NCAI Policy Research Center and MSU Center for Native Health Partnerships. (2012). 'Walk softly and listen carefully': Building research relationships with tribal communities. Washington, DC, and Bozeman, MT. ncai.org/resources/ncai_publications/walk-softly-and-listen-carefully-building-research-relationships-with-tribal-communities

Understanding the challenge: Building racial and ethnic competencies

Kendi, I. X. (2016). *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. New York, NY: Nation Books.

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5. Kendi, Ibram X. 2016. *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. New York, NY: New York, NY: Nation Books.

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Bears Ears

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11. Patrick Gonzales-Rogers (BEITC Executive Director), interview, February 20, 2020.

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On the back cover: *A Yurok acorn-gathering basket, woven from hazel shoots and other forest materials. Photo by Kiliii Yüyan, courtesy of* High Country News.